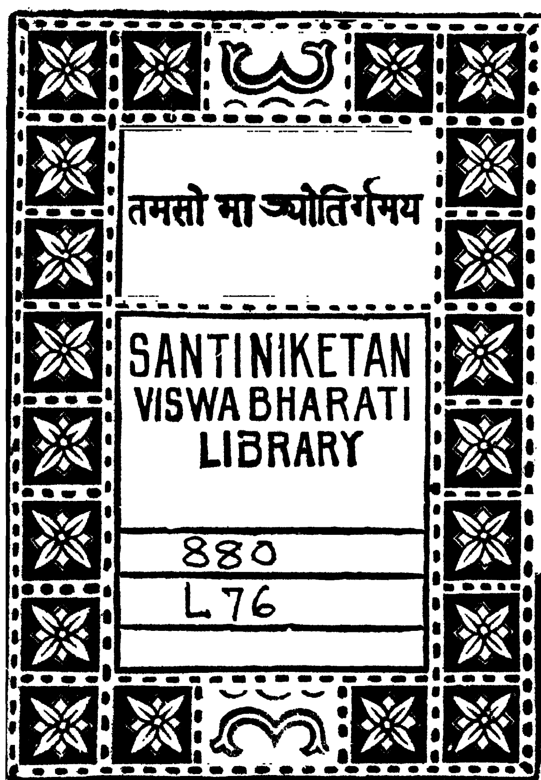


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THE GREEK GENIUS
AND
ITS MEANING TO US

BY

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PREFACE

When I began to teach Latin and Greek, a friend asked me what I supposed myself to have learnt from them, and what I was trying to teach others. This book was written as an attempt to answer the question, as far as Greek is concerned. It was written to inform, primarily myself, secondarily my pupils. It is therefore intentionally popular, and, like the poems of Lucilius, designed *neque indoctissimis neque doctissimis*: it uses modern illustrations, and tries, as far as possible, to put what it has to say in a readable form. I hope it may serve as a general introduction to the study of Greek literature, and for that purpose be acceptable, not only to such students or teachers of the classics as feel themselves to be in the class indicated above, but also to the considerable public who take a humane interest in what Greece has done for the world. For my intention has been to try and make the spirit of Greece alive for myself at the present day, to translate it, as far as I could, into modern language, and to trace its relationship to our own ways of thinking and feeling.

If I do not apologize for the manner in which this ambitious task has been executed, it is not because I have no misgivings. Few people could write a book on this subject, and feel satisfied with it. Still, if I am not convincing, I shall at any rate be contentious, and educationally the second quality is perhaps more valuable than the first. On the same grounds I would excuse myself for having raised many questions which are left half-

answered: the method may stimulate readers, if it does not satisfy them.

'The Greek Genius' is an unsatisfactory title for a book which says nothing about Greek politics or Greek sculpture; but 'the Genius of Greek Literature' was too narrow for my purpose, and 'Some Aspects of the Greek Genius', which I should have preferred, was already appropriated: so that the present name has been adopted, and the exact scope of the book indicated in the introductory chapter (see esp. pp. 13, 14). That chapter also explains who, for my purposes, 'the Greeks' have been taken to be; it is intended to safeguard the book against certain obvious criticisms, and may well be omitted by general readers who are not concerned with these points.

As I am writing for a general audience, I have either quoted in English or else translated my quotations. For Thucydides and Plato I have generally made use of Jowett. Gaps in the quotations are not indicated unless they affect the general sense of the passage. For a book of this kind an index is of little value, and I have therefore substituted a full table of contents.

The book owes much to my mother and sister, who have helped me with criticism and in other ways; to Mr. P. E. Matheson, my former tutor, and to Mr. R. W. Chapman of the University Press, who have corrected the proofs and made suggestions; and to Professor Gilbert Murray, to whom I should like to express especial gratitude, not only for reading and criticizing most of the book in draft, but also for teaching me, as he has taught so many others, to look on Greek thought as a living thing.[1]

[1] I have, however, no right to imply that Professor Murray agrees with what the book contains.

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INTRODUCTION

EUROPE has nearly four million square miles; Lancashire has 1,700; Attica has 700. Yet this tiny country has given us an art which we, with it and all that the world has done since it for our models, have equalled perhaps, but not surpassed. It has given us the staple of our vocabulary in every domain of thought and knowledge. Politics, tyranny, democracy, anarchism, philosophy, physiology, geology, history—these are all Greek words. It has seized and up to the present day kept hold of our higher education. It has exercised an unfailing fascination, even on minds alien or hostile. Rome took her culture thence. Young Romans completed their education in the Greek schools. Roman orators learnt their trade from Greek rhetoricians. Roman proconsuls on their way to the East stopped to spend a few days talking to the successors of Plato and Aristotle in the Academy and Lyceum. Roman aristocrats imported Greek philosophers to live in their families. And so it was with natures less akin to Greece than the Roman. S. Paul, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, who called the wisdom of the Greeks foolishness, was drawn to their Areopagus, and found himself accommodating his gospel to the style, and quoting verses from the poets, of this alien race. After him, the Church, which was born to protest against Hellenism, translated its dogmas into the language of Greek thought and finally crystallized them in the philosophy of Aristotle.

Then for a time Greek influence on the West died down. An intellectual and political system repugnant to its genius mastered the world, and Hellenism, buried in Byzantine libraries and imprisoned in a language that Europe had forgotten, seemed to have finally passed away. A few centuries go by; suddenly we find Italy intoxicated with the Greek spirit, as with new wine; poring over it, interpreting it, hopelessly misunderstanding it; leaving Pre-Raphaelite art in order to dig up its broken statues, forgetting the magnificent monuments of Gothic architecture in order to imitate its Parthenon, deserting Dante in order to hunt for its crabbed manuscripts, at the expense of fortune and of life. Even then the revivifying power of Hellenism was not spent nor its work done. Two centuries later, a poor tradesman's son born among the 'ugly Brandenburg sand-hills' and educated in the stagnant German universities of the day, catches a glimpse of the meaning of Greek Art, never forgets the vision through weary years as schoolmaster and librarian in provincial German towns, professes Romanism that he may follow the gleam to Italy, and there living in perpetual communion with Greek sculpture, 'opens a new sense for the study of art and initiates a new organ for the human spirit'.[1] With Winckelmann the race starts anew, and has run unbroken to our own day. He handed the torch of Hellenism to Goethe, and it became the law of life and the standard of beauty to the profoundest poet of the modern world. Goethe passed it on to Nietzsche, and the great rebel and prophet of our age found in pre-Socratic Greece the nearest likenesses to his ideal humanity. Continually laid aside—it is too tremendous and fatiguing for the world to live

[1] Hegel, quoted in Pater's essay on Winckelmann (*Renaissance Studies*).

CHAPTER I

THE GREEK GENIUS: THE NOTE OF BEAUTY

As to the Greek genius the critics have always been in the strangest disagreement. Goethe thought that it was placid, stately and in repose like its sculpture, and pictured the Greeks as an Olympian humanity living in an ideal world, whose very passions were tranquil and profound. Other writers see a world of Naiads and Bacchantes and wine and love, reeling in an ecstasy of drunken abandonment to every gusty desire and instinct of the flesh, nakedly animal. To Hobbes a classical education seemed to promote Rebellion against Monarchy, especially in 'young men and all others that are unprovided of the Antidote of solid Reason, receiving a strong and delightful impression of the great exploits of warre, atchieved by the Conductors of their Armies'; Bentham, expressing much the same opinion in the language of a later age, thought that the study of Greek might lead men to imitate the legislation of Solon and Lycurgus, and so impair the security of property; Johnson, in a petulant paradox, described the audience of Demosthenes as 'a barbarous people, an assembly of brutes'; an eighteenth-century translator of Herodotus fears that 'indolence was the characteristic feature of the Athenians'; that 'they were lovers of their ease and averse to labour': while to-day if you ask an undergraduate (who has probably been studying their language for some ten years) what

are the peculiar characteristics of the Greeks, he is apt, after a moment of hesitation, to hazard the suggestion that the ancients were less sensitive to the beauties of scenery than ourselves. *Quot homines. . . .*

None of these theories of Hellenism need engage our attention long. Some of them have been generally and justly abandoned; others are clearly narrow and incomplete; with one we shall deal hereafter. But there is a view of the Greek genius which seems to be gaining ground at the present, and which is so important that we must not overlook it. To-day our attention is being called to the moral genius of the Greeks, to their deliberate, laborious and triumphant battle for virtue. We are asked to see in them a race of men who, emerging, like other nations, from their primitive state with a conventional code of morality and clinging shreds of barbarism, became conscious of these, and quietly corrected or put them aside, and, using no art but what every one possesses, confessing no standard but what every one admits, felt after, found, and securely possessed themselves of, the rational principles of justice, mercy, humanity, and truth. The study of these men and their writings can give us, we are told, if not an εὐαγγέλιον in the Christian sense, yet a rule by which we can live; and their admirers, prizing the Greek spirit in its graver and more serious aspects, turn to Greek literature as other men turn to the Bible. I am thinking here of certain expressions used by Professor von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff; but passages in Professor Murray's book on Homer seem to lend colour to this view.

There is much to support this theory. The severest critic of Hellenism can hardly deny that a nation which produced the Aristotelian doctrine of the Mean and the

Stoic ideal of virtue, which gave to the Roman Empire a philosophy of life, and to the Christian religion a framework of ethics, stands among the moral benefactors of mankind; nor is it surprising that some persons are inclined to see the greatest achievement of Greece in its struggle out of barbarism to a rational virtue. Certainly it was a great achievement. Yet before it dazzles us into believing that the central quality in the Greek spirit was its moral genius, let us reflect. Is moral genius really the essential, exceptional, unique gift of the race? Is it the character with which the whole nation is stamped, the quality we think of when we think of the Greeks, the gift which stares out at us from their literature and history, the power which inspired the imaginations of their philosophers and the thoughts of their politicians, which took form under the hands of their sculptors and on the lips of their writers, which embodied itself in the prose and poetry, the art and monuments of Greece? Surely not.

The essential qualities of a race should be found in its most eminent representatives. But a passion for morality is very subordinate (to say the least) in the genius of some of the greatest Greeks. To judge by their remaining fragments, there was none in Sappho and her peers. It is not conspicuous in Homer or Herodotus: we shall not learn mercy and righteousness from Achilles or Odysseus. Aristophanes, a Greek of Greeks, lends even less countenance to the view which sees in Hellenism a superior type of Christianity, purged of dogma and adorned with all the graces and gifts of culture; and it is at times chastening to remember, as it is in general better to forget, that many of the most graceful Greek vases are offerings dedicated to unnatural vice, and many of the most beautiful Greek

statues are figures modelled from notorious courtesans. Unless we are prepared to ignore the Aphrodites, and to put Herodotus and Aristophanes on an *index librorum prohibitorum*, we must look for some wider generalization to include them.

Even with men like Socrates and Plato, men very different from Aristophanes and Herodotus, it may be questioned how far moral striving was the centre of their souls. It is not that on certain points their standard is other than ours. But their whole moral atmosphere is different from that of a man like S. Paul. Turn to the close of one of his epistles, where with warning and encouragement, with argument and exhortation, the Apostle is urging on some infant community the practice of the Christian virtues. One on the heels of another, his precepts come tumbling out, breaking impetuously into questions, reinforced by quotations, by adjurations, by appeals to his personal experience, by prayers, by tears. It is difficult to select single instances from S. Paul, for the whole of his epistles are instinct with a feeling which, except perhaps for certain passages in Plato and Euripides, is absent from Greek literature ; a passionate hunger for righteousness, a passionate indignation against those who frustrate it. He overflows in enthusiastic denunciations. Of sexual vice he writes 'let it not be once named among you'. Of avarice he says that the covetous man has no inheritance in the Kingdom of God. Of the chief Christian virtue he writes in a splendid paradox that though a man bestow his goods to feed the poor, and have all knowledge and all faith, yet if he has not charity 'it profiteth him nothing'. Everywhere he is instant in season and out of season, without regard of consequences to condemn evil. For him Christ can have no concord with Belial.

He is exceedingly jealous for the Lord. Very different, surely, from this is the atmosphere of a Platonic dialogue; in passing to it the thermometer seems to have fallen many degrees. Even if the same conclusions are there, they are urged with comparative coldness. After S. Paul there seems something opportunistic about the morality of Plato and his master.

Partly it was that the Greeks had no real sense of sin. They regarded their offences as shortcomings and called them *ἁμαρτίαι*, 'bad shots.' Such things were bound to happen, and when they happened were best forgotten. Useless to spend thought and remorse on bad shots: it is best to go forward and improve the aim for next time. But to S. Paul departures from the path of righteousness are not shortcomings or misses or frailties or failures, but sins; and sin is something haunting, irreparable (except for Divine intervention), and, once committed, standing as 'all eternity's offence'.

Partly it was that the Greek was not interested in the moral side of humanity so exclusively as S. Paul. He did not concentrate his energies on the virtues, without which man cannot know God; nor would he have been content if he could have made the world chaste, sober, charitable, truthful, full of loving kindness and mercy. He was not always particular about these qualities, and in any case he required much beside them. There were other things in life, he thought, as well as morality; politics, art, knowledge, feast-days demanded his attention; and S. Paul, always playing a single theme, would have seemed to him one-sided.

Partly it was a difference in method between the Greek and the Jew. Even when a Greek was deeply interested in morality, his attitude to it was one of reason rather than

of passion. Here is a passage—not remarkable in itself—which illustrates this. In a fit of jealousy a woman tries to poison a youth whom she supposes to be her stepson. The plot is discovered and he in his turn proposes to kill her. The priestess of Apollo checks him. 'Did you hear,' he says, 'that she planned to kill me?' 'Yes,' replies the priestess, 'yet your savage temper is wrong.' 'May I not kill those who try to kill me?' he objects. And how does the priestess answer him? Not with indignation, not with protests against such impious talk, not with an appeal to feelings or sentiment, but simply with quiet reason; 'women, you know, always do hate a stepson.' And the boy does homage to common sense and lays his ὠμότης aside.[1] That is very Greek. Not to be furious and indignant, but keeping the eye on reason to trust in that; not to denounce and threaten, but to point out the irrationality of sin, knowing that human beings cannot rest in the irrational; not to be Isaiah or S. Paul, but to be Socrates.

But reasonableness, which makes the best moral thinkers, does not make the best moral reformers. Nor does the want of a sense of sin make them; nor does manysidedness make them. These qualities are unfavourable to the concentration—I had almost said the intolerance—without which effective campaigns against the deeper weaknesses of human nature are hardly to be fought. So that in spite of their achievements as moral philosophers, we may well hesitate to place any Greeks as moralists by the side of the greatest Christians. And yet, as I write the words, the figures of Zeno and Panaetius and Poseidonius and the Stoic teachers, with their gospel of uncompromising and unconditioned virtue, rise to

[1] Eur. *Ion*, 1326 ff.

protest. So dangerous is it to deny any gift to this manysided people.

Every one has his *magnum secretum* which will explain every riddle and unlock every door: and I am inclined to think that there is one elemental quality from which most things in the Greek genius may be derived: though it is not a love of beauty or a passion for righteousness. But of this more later. At present it will be safer to assume that the Greeks were as manysided as they seem. We will therefore pick out certain salient qualities in them, what in theological language may be called the Notes of Hellenism: we will define these and indicate the significance of each separately. That done, it will be time enough to see whether there is any common factor in them, whether they can be traced back to any single source. As the greater part of the book will be occupied in discussing these separate qualities, it will be well to plunge at once *in medias res.* My first Note is the Note of Beauty: which, if not the most important, is at least the most obvious characteristic of Hellenism.

At the outset let us guard against a common misconception. The modern interest in Hellenism really dates from Winckelmann, and Winckelmann drew his ideas of the Greeks mainly from their art. Hence came a conception of them such as a man might form who had merely seen the Elgin Marbles and the Aphrodites, and had never corrected his view of their creators by the study of Greek history and literature. The Greeks, it appeared, were beyond all things beauty-lovers. They stripped at their sports; they gave prizes for beauty; Lais fascinated them; they spent their days in games and festivals;

they studied to 'observe propriety both in feature and action', so that 'even a quick walk was regarded as opposed to their sense of decorum'.[1] Winckelmann had looked on the tranquil beauty of Greek art, on Niobe and her daughters unmoved and beautiful in the anguish of death, on the placid and passionless features of the turbulent goddess of love; till he was led almost to fancy that the serene figures of the Parthenon marbles were portraits of the ordinary Greek, and that the streets of Athens were full of well-draped statuesque men pacing reposefully through an august life.

This view (Goethe himself at times encourages it) coloured the glasses through which Europe looked at Greece for many generations, and has been corrupted into a watery aestheticism, very different from what Winckelmann meant by it. Fifty years ago most people would have said that the remarkable thing about the Greeks was their sense of beauty. Towns composed of beautiful buildings, temples adorned with beautiful statuary, a population almost entirely consisting of beautiful young men, who spent their lives in admiring the beauty around them—such was Athens to the eyes of the Mid-Victorians; such it is probably still to most educated persons who have only a casual knowledge of Greek culture; and some well-known paintings perpetuate the mistake by portraying young Athenians as limp forms, requiring only a slight change of dress to pass for women out of a picture by Burne-Jones.

We may make up our minds at once that the Greeks were not like Jellaby Postlethwaite or the aesthetes in *Patience* or Sir William Richmond's young men. Gaping in wonder at the masterpieces of Phidias was not the daily

[1] Winckelmann, *Hist. of Greek Art* (tr. Lodge), pt. 2. c. 3. § 5.

occupation of Athenians. Indeed, if we could speak to one of them, there might be several preliminary misunderstandings to clear up. Imagine, for instance, Thucydides and Mr. Swinburne meeting in the lower world. We may suppose the Victorian turning the conversation to Aeschylus and the Parthenon, and explaining how he and his friends had looked back with infinite longing to Athens, out of a world from which beauty had vanished. Doubtless Thucydides would receive his rhapsody with politeness, but he would also feel a touch of wonder at a civilization which set exclusive store on these things; a little too *ἀπράγμων*, too indolent, he might call it. 'Yes,' one may fancy him saying, 'those temples we built with imperial money were beautiful, and Aeschylus was a grand old fighter and poet—I felt more drawn to Euripides myself.—But there were greater things in Athens than these. You have forgotten, I think, our empire and the spirit that made it; the eternal glory of Athens rests on that. One day in the ecclesia, after the plague and the strain of war had begun to tell, Pericles declared the achievements by which Athens expected to be remembered among men—perhaps you have read the words in my history. He did not mention our poetry, our architecture, our statuary; he said nothing of Aeschylus or Phidias; but he wished our epitaph in the cemetery of the nations to be this: "Know that our city has the greatest name in all the world because she has never yielded to misfortunes, but has sacrificed more lives and endured more hardships in war than any other. Even if we should be compelled at last to abate something of our greatness, yet will the recollection live, that of all Hellenes we ruled over the greatest number of Hellenic subjects; that we withstood our enemies, whether

single or united, in the most terrible wars, and that we were the inhabitants of a city endowed with every sort of wealth and greatness. The indolent may criticize, but the enterprising will emulate, and the unsuccessful envy us." '[1]

The fifth-century Athenian was no more a Mid-Victorian aesthete than he was a Cobdenite Liberal. His real peculiarity was an overpowering energy, that was always busy at something. With a childish delight he threw himself on the world that opened before him, travelling, trading, prospecting, fighting, founding small settlements, sending out small armies, planning expansion abroad, executing reform at home, an elector, a voter, an administrator, a public servant, yet not too busy for recreation or religion when the calendar brought the feast-day round, and taking art and literature as two among the thousand occupations of his caleidoscopic life. In 458 B.C. this tiny town, whose total citizen population was not so large as that of Portsmouth, lost citizens fighting in Cyprus, Egypt, Phoenice, Halieis, Aegina, Megara. The Corinthian envoy summed up the Athenian character well when he said: 'They are revolutionary, equally quick in the conception and in the execution of every new plan. They are always abroad. For they hope to gain something by leaving their homes. To do their business (τὰ δέοντα) is their only holiday, and they deem the quiet of inaction to be as disagreeable as the most tiresome occupation. If a man should say of them that they were born neither to have peace themselves nor to allow peace to others he would simply speak the truth.'[2] And Xenophon gives the Athenians a similar character. After saying that in international singing contests no one could surpass

[1] Thuc. 2. 64. [2] Ib. 1. 70.

them, he adds: 'yet it is not in beauty of voice or in stature or strength that they are superior to other people, but in the ambition that fires them to noble and honourable achievement.'[1] There is no ornamental aestheticism in these people.

The aesthetic idea of the Athenian came from attributing to the fifth century what became common in the third. Later Hellenism is interested in Art for Art's sake, describes pictures, statues, *objets de vertu* at length. But the attitude of the classical age to these things is more nearly expressed in the words of the Socrates of Xenophon: 'It gives me far more pleasure to hear about the good qualities of a living woman than to see a beautiful one painted for me by Zeuxis.'[2] A striking sentiment from the fellow countryman of Phidias! Even more definite is Plato. (If Xenophon's words should be inscribed over every picture gallery, Plato's should be at the entrance to every theatre.) He says that in the ideal state tragic poets are not required, 'for we also according to our ability are tragic poets, and our tragedy is the best and most beautiful; our whole state, you know, is an imitation of the best and most beautiful life.'[3] The Greeks were lovers of literature and art; but their ideal of existence was not a round of literary and artistic small-talk. They went to their theatre; but they knew that it was better themselves to enact the drama of life than to see it on the stage. They were more interested in life than in art.

The Greeks then were not aesthetes, and they had many qualities besides a love of beauty. Yet they are the authors of the most beautiful statues, the most beautiful buildings,

[1] Xen. *Mem.* 3. 3. 13. [2] Xen. *Oec.* 10. 1.
[3] *Laws*, 817.

and the most beautiful poems in the world. In mere beauty their art and literature has never been equalled. If so, it is worth considering what kind of feeling for beauty produced them.

The modern man has a just and well-trained sense for beautiful things. Our millionaires, though they may make their money in unlovely ways, have a fine taste for Holbeins and old china: and the most impoverished of us are ambitious to fill villas with a mixture of Chippendale and old oak. We live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light. We are all lovers of beauty now. Only there is this weakness about our love. It is little more than a feeling for isolated bits and fragments of beauty. It is narrow and local. If we have our good picture, or our graceful furniture, or our occasional glimpse of fine scenery, we ask no more. We live cheerfully in an ugly villa, we watch the local builder providing angular tenements for our poorer neighbours, we are content to read books cheaply bound and badly printed, we study the newspapers without a qualm at the style of their articles, we are called Hogg or Ramsbottom or Mudd or Peabody, and nobody minds. It is not merely that we endure these things as necessary evils; they do not distress us. We have what I may call a picture-gallery sense of beauty; a sense that can be turned on and off like a tap. We go into the National Gallery out of the roar of the motor omnibus; and our sense of beauty is turned on and we enjoy the pictures. It is turned off again, and we go out through the motor omnibus arena, to a place called an Aerated Bread Shop. In fact we have (and considering the circumstances of our lives are happy to have) a beauty nerve which only is sensitive when we want it to be so. Now the Greeks were different. Their

sense of beauty ran through their whole life, and like a ferment transformed it.

This is easier to say than to prove, for the human beings that were the best evidence of it have long been mingled with the dust of the Cerameicus, and their life is easier to praise than to understand. Shall we invoke the witness of great men of letters? Heine who with extraordinary bitterness contrasts what he calls the 'dismal, meagre, ascetic, overspiritual Judaism of the Nazarenes', with 'Hellenic joyousness, love of beauty, and fresh delight in life';[1] Renan who avowed, 'The impression Athens made on me is far the strongest I have ever felt: there is one place where perfection exists: there is no other; that place is Athens:' and he goes on to speak of it as 'a thing which has existed only once, which has never been seen or will be seen again, yet of which the effect will last eternally, a type of eternal beauty *sans nulle tache locale ou nationale*'?[2]

Judgements such as these carry weight: but it is better to go direct to the literature of the Greeks and there see for ourselves how all-pervasive their sense of beauty was. Consider their names:[3] and compare in respect of beauty Aristocrates (Noble Power), Cleomenes (Famous Might), Aristonoe (Noble Mind), Aspasia (Welcome), with Fabius (Beanman), Piso or Cicero (Peaman), Naevius (Warty), Capito (Greathead). Consider the casual unpremeditated expressions of the Greeks and see how an unconscious grace informs them. No doubt Mr. Roosevelt's emotions when he saw New York after his

[1] *Götter im Exil.*

[2] *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse,* p. 59 f.

[3] See Weise, *Language and Character of the Roman People* (tr. Strong), p. 31 f.

travels round the globe were much the same as those of Xenophon's soldiery, when after their wanderings in Anatolia they caught sight of the familiar sea; yet there is all the difference in the world between their respective exclamations, 'Say, boys, that's bully,' and *θάλαττα, θάλαττα.*[1]

Thus the Greeks touched every incident of life, however familiar or unlikely, with beauty. It might be a nickname. It might be, as Pater has remarked, an event which takes place every hour of the day in a seaside village, without our noticing anything remarkable in it. 'Homer had said

> *οἱ δ' ὅτε δὴ λιμένος πολυβενθέος ἐντὸς ἵκοντο,*
> *ἱστία μὲν στείλαντο, θέσαν δ' ἐν νηὶ μελαίνῃ,*
> *ἐκ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ βαῖνον ἐπὶ ῥηγμῖνι θαλάσσης.*

And how poetic the simple incident seemed, told just thus! Homer was always telling things after this manner.'[2] And Homer is not alone in this. It is the same with every Greek poet. Sappho describes an apple left ungathered on its tree.

> *οἷον τὸ γλυκύμαλον ἐρεύθεται ἄκρῳ ἐπ' ὕσδῳ*
> *ἄκρον ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῳ· λελάθοντο δὲ μαλοδρόπηες·*
> *οὐ μὰν ἐκλελάθοντ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐδύναντ' ἐπικέσθαι.*[3]

The subject is trifling, the language simple: yet these three lines are enough to make the fortune of a poet. Translate them into English, and they are faded and

[1] Vide the daily papers on Mr. Roosevelt's return home. Cf. Fitzgerald, *Letters*, ii. 49 (Eversley ed.): 'The sea . . . likes to be called θάλασσα and πόντος better than the wretched word "Sea", I am sure.'

[2] 'When they came within the deep harbour, they furled their sails, and laid them in the dark ship, and themselves disembarked on the beach of the sea.' Quoted in *Marius the Epicurean*, I. 100.

[3] fr. 93, 'As the sweet-apple reddens on a bough's end, at its very end; the gatherers have forgotten it; nay they did not forget but could not reach it.'

colourless, like the gold in the fairy story which turned to withered leaves.

This touch of beauty explains a feature of Greek literature which we do not always adequately appreciate, its sustained perfection of style. In variety and range, in power of imagination, in play of fancy, our own is at least its equal: but unlike the Greek it does not keep at one high unsinking level of perfect style. How much ill-finished work have Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, Tennyson, Browning left! Shakespeare himself is not blameless; of all our great poets perhaps only Milton and Pope can boast unfailing excellence of style. But the Greek poets are all like Pope and Milton—it is only of style in the narrow sense that I am speaking. Even when the thought is trifling and the language undistinguished, the workmanship is nearly always good. The sawdust of the workshop has been brushed away from their verse, the edges have been trimmed and rounded, the whole has been painted and polished. And this artistic excellence holds almost throughout Greek literature. In general the Greeks' sense of beauty revolted against any kind of slovenliness: and we shall agree with Horace—a good judge of such things—when he pointed to them as the supreme masters of artistic eloquence, and said to his young pupils

Vos exemplaria Graeca
nocturna versate manu, versate diurna.

Let me bring this point out more clearly by comparing an English with a Greek writer, Scott with Homer. If we had not been well brought up, it would be possible to argue that in a sense Scott was the greater of the two—I am only thinking of Scott's prose.

Wandering Willie's tale, the death of Elspeth in *The Antiquary*, the curse of Meg Merrilies, the meeting of Clara and Tyrrell in the wood, the parting of Diana Vernon and Frank Osbaldiston on the heath, the agonizing of Balfour of Burley in the cave above the linn, certain passages from *The Heart of Midlothian*, the hags of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, and indeed the whole of that most tragic of tales—if it came to the weighing of passages things might go hard with Homer. But where the Greek stands so far above the Scottish writer, is in what Shelley calls his 'sustained grandeur', in what I should like to call his sustained perfection. Great tracts of Homer are dull; the action (at least in the *Iliad*) progresses very slowly; and we tire of hearing in how many different ways an ancient warrior could be killed. But there is hardly a bad line in the whole, hardly a passage lacking distinction; for with his unsleeping Greek instinct for beauty the writer could not be careless or slovenly in execution. Sometimes '*bonus dormitat Homerus*'—so thought Horace; still it is a very rare failing in him, and Homer is beautiful even in sleep. No one can say as much for Scott: his hours of slumber are prolonged and unlovely.

All this is testimony to the extraordinarily heightened power of beauty in the Greek. But there is one bit of evidence which we have left to the end; I mean what is ordinarily known as the 'aesthetic morality' of Hellenism. Practically we confine beauty to personal appearance, landscape, literature, and something called art. The Greek gave it a much wider scope. He extended it to morals. Where we speak of good, he was ready to say beautiful; where we speak of evil, he was ready to say ugly. It was beautiful, *καλόν*, in his eyes, if a citizen died for his country, if a man showed respect for piety,

if a government was excellent. Victory, temperance, eloquence, the punishment of vice, frankness, wisdom, and readiness to listen to wisdom, were not merely good, they were 'beautiful'. An Englishman would admire these qualities and praise them. A Greek spoke of them as if they gave him the same emotions as the sight of a beautiful human being.

We must not push this argument too far. *Καλός* in time almost lost its original significance, and the Greeks used it as an indefinite term of praise, just as we use the word 'fine'. But the mere fact that it was used in an extended sense shows a certain temperament, a certain way of feeling towards life, a tendency to find beauty in things in which we should not think of finding it, and to see it and expect it everywhere. Just as some people are more sensitive than others to atmospheric conditions, to a change of wind, to sunless weather, to an increase of electricity in the air, so the Greeks were more sensitive to beauty than we are, responding to its presence more readily, and more painfully conscious of its absence.

With evidence like this before them, it is not surprising if our forefathers concluded that the Greeks were above all else aesthetes. It was a natural view to hold, and so far true, that one great difference between us and the Greeks lies in our inferior sense of beauty. But those who held it forgot three things: first, that in history the Greeks were obviously occupied with many things other than, and many things alien from, beauty; second, that some of their greatest writers (Herodotus and Thucydides for instance), show no exceptional aesthetic sense; third, that a nation, which was principally remarkable for its sense of beauty, would have little interest for the modern world. These three considerations are quite enough to dispose of the

idea that the genius of Hellenism is a love and a power of beauty.

NOTE

Those who are more accustomed to English than to Greek literature, may feel a certain baldness in many passages of the latter which are held up to their admiration; and as we have already quoted some such passages and shall later have occasion to quote more, a word on the point may not be out of place. The classic is apt simply to take us to a scene and leave us amid its beauty, the modern is determined that we shall be thrilled with the proper emotions.[1] Thus Sappho addresses the evening star simply: 'Hesperus, bringing all things that bright Dawn scattered, you bring the goat, you bring the sheep, you bring the child back to its mother.'[2] But Byron, taking the same idea, writes:

> O Hesperus, thou bringest all good things—
> Home to the weary, to the hungry cheer,
> To the young bird the parent's brooding wings,
> The welcome stall to the o'erlaboured steer;
> Whate'er of peace about our hearthstone clings,
> Whate'er our household gods protect of dear,
> Are gathered round us by thy look of rest;
> Thou bring'st the child too to its mother's breast.

Byron has not added anything essential to his original. He has merely amplified it, commented on it, elicited the feelings which it should convey, and put them on paper so that we cannot miss them. Sappho simply stated the facts, and left them to diffuse of themselves their inner beauty and power.

[1] Of course there is some 'modern' writing in classical, and much 'classical' writing in modern literature.

[2] fr. 95 *Ϝέσπερε, πάντα φέρων, ὄσα φαίνολις ἐσκέδασ' αὔως,*
φέρεις οἶν, φέρες αἶγα, φέρεις ἄπυ ματέρι παῖδα.

Perhaps this is not a fair illustration ; perhaps Byron is deliberately expanding a given sentiment. Still the difference between his lines and those of Sappho represent a real divergence of practice. The classic gives the text, the modern expounds it. The classic shows us the scene, the modern explains what feelings it should evoke. Indeed, the modern is sometimes so bent on this, that he fails to ensure that we shall actually see the scene itself. It is so, in this description of the declining year :

> In the mid-days of autumn, on their eves
> The breath of Winter comes from far away,
> And the sick west continually bereaves
> Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay
> Of death among the bushes and the leaves.

Keats suggests to us the sighing winds, the faded colours, he melancholy atmosphere of autumnal decay, but he brings nothing definite before our senses : unlike Tennyson who, writing in the classical manner, makes us both see and hear

> Through the faded leaf
> The chestnut pattering to the ground.

And so, to a lesser extent, with Shelley's lines on the moon :

> Pale for weariness
> Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
> Wandering companionless
> Among the stars that have a different birth,—
> And ever changing, like a joyless eye
> That finds no object worth its constancy.

Shelley makes us feel the moon's weird isolation, but he does so, not by simply showing us the moon, but by saying repeatedly how desolate she is. Homer, on the other hand, makes no comments ; he simply speaks of ' the stars appearing very clear around the bright moon,

when the heaven is windless': [1] and Virgil simply describes the trembling path of her light on the sea:

Splendet tremulo sub lumine pontus.

So far the classic goes, but no further: he shows us the scene, generally without much detail, but leaves us to supply the appropriate emotions; and because many readers have no emotions to supply, they are apt to find the classic unfeeling and cold.

Another result of the 'classical' method may be briefly indicated. It is partly answerable for the view that the Greeks did not care about the beauties of nature. They did care, but they did not rhapsodize about them. And Homer writes so quietly of

λειμῶνες ἁλὸς πολιοῖο παρ' ὄχθας
ὑδρηλοὶ μαλακοί,

or of

ἐπὶ κρατὸς λιμένος ῥέει ἀγλαὸν ὕδωρ,
κρήνη ὑπὸ σπείους,

or of

κύματα μακρὰ κυλινδόμενα προτὶ χέρσον, [2]

that we do not mark the words or observe how perfectly they suggest the charm of water-meadows, and clear springs, and long rollers on the Aegean beaches.

[1] *Il.* 8. 555.

[2] *Od.* 9. 132–3, 140–1, 147:
Meadows by the banks of the grey sea, soft water-meadows.'
'At the harbour head flows bright water, a spring from under a cave.'
'Long breakers rolling to the land.'

CHAPTER II

THE NOTE OF FREEDOM

GOETHE was as responsible as any one for the idea that the Greeks were before all things lovers of beauty. Yet he himself supplies a corrective for this view of Hellenism. He says somewhere that the distinguishing mark of the Greeks was the passion, not for beauty, but for truth. Goethe did not mean, of course, that the Greeks always spoke the truth: patently, few nations have a history so full of unblushing lies, and in later days *Graeca levitas* supplanted *Punica fides* as a byword with the honest Roman. Nor did he mean that the Greeks were always right: truthfulness in this sense is not given to man. He meant rather that the Greeks did on the whole look straight at life, and see it as in fact it is; that they had what Matthew Arnold called 'an unclouded clearness of mind'. And taken in this sense Goethe's words are not difficult to justify.

Certainly in reading Greek literature, we keep tasting in it, as a perpetually recurrent ingredient, some quality which we are tempted to call truthfulness, though the name hardly covers the thing. We are conscious of looking at a picture which is a faithful portrait: of gazing in a crystal that reveals life not cloudily or confusedly, but with the colour exact and the lines unblurred. Not many literatures are of this kind. In the Irish stories of Finn and Cuchulain there is a great deal of beauty and heroism and romance: but their world is palpably unreal and inhuman. Hills which emit white birds and

unwoundable pigs, thistle-stalks and fuzzballs which take the appearance of armies, witches who shoot heroes through a hole in a leaf, dogs that turn men to ashes by their breath, or produce out of their mouths quantities of gold and silver, harps that spring to their owners and kill nine men on the way, shields that roar to each other and are answered by the Three Waves of Ireland; themes like these may be found in Homer, but the Irish writer is utterly given over to them. The bizarre and the supernatural infinitely predominate in him over the natural and the human. His is no picture of the real world and the actual life men live in it: an illusive, unreal dream, a merely quaint and fanciful beauty, passes before our eyes.

Greek literature is very different. No doubt the historic Greek had absurd and superstitious ideas; we are beginning with difficulty to discover their nature from stray allusions to them. But the obscurity of the whole subject shows how little it affected Greek literature, and that literature is all which matters to us. In it the Greek appears as looking at life with much the same eyes as our own. We should be lost in the world of Irish legend: we should not know what to say to Finn or Cuchulain; we might accommodate ourselves politely to their views, but we could never enter into them. But who would not be at home, and feel some community of soul, with Nestor or Achilles or Ulysses? Still more so, when we pass from epic heroes and come to Alcaeus and Simonides and Sophocles and the rest. We feel that they saw the world truthfully, not as an arena for spells and witchcraft and conventional heroism, but as the world really is.

And when we leave the rough and tumble view of life

held by more or less ordinary men and come to the thinkers of Greece, it is just the same. We find their speculations about the nature of God and man reasonable, just and surprisingly modern. Euripides writes:

> Thou deep Base of the World, and thou high Throne,
> Above the World, whoe'er thou art, unknown
> And hard of surmise, Chain of Things that be
> Or Reason of our Reason: God, to thee
> I lift my praise, seeing the silent road
> That bringeth justice, ere the end be trod.[1]

And we observe that he is roughly summing up in the third and fourth of these lines the two modern philosophies of materialism and idealism, and in the whole himself expressing a modern creed of optimistic agnosticism. Plato writes: 'God is never in any way unrighteous—he is perfect righteousness; and he of us who is the most righteous is most like him.'[2] And we recognize an idea of Deity as sublime as that of Christianity. When we turn to the *Republic* we find the deepest questions of politics discussed with a freedom and profundity and acuteness which no subsequent age has surpassed. In fact, the Greeks take quite as reasonable a view of the world as we do; and this is due to what Goethe called their truthfulness.

When we analyse further, and ask why the speculations of Euripides and Plato had advanced as far as our own, we find two causes, two ingredients in this quality of truthfulness. The first of these is a practically unbounded licence to religious, moral, and political speculation. Our own age enjoys an equal liberty. But it is astonishing that a nation should have possessed it so early in the

[1] *Troades*, 884 f. (tr. Murray).
[2] *Theaet.* 176 c.

history of mankind. We may call it the Note of Freedom; a Greek would have called it *Παρρησία*.

The life of some nations is largely determined by theological considerations. They exist to serve God. Certain actions, sometimes whole sides of life, are excluded because they seem inconsistent with this purpose. The God they worship is a jealous God. The Mohammedan is forbidden to paint or carve the human form, because sculpture and painting lead to idolatry. The Jew must abstain from work and pleasure one day in the week, because the Sabbath is holy. The Christian of the Dark Ages was forbidden to believe in the 'anile fable' of the Antipodes, and given a 'Christian Topography of the universe, established by considerations from Divine Scripture concerning which it is not lawful for a Christian to doubt';[1] he was hampered in commerce because the Law of Moses forbade usury; and his late descendants[2] were discouraged from adopting the theatrical profession by the eternal damnation attached to the status of actor.

The life of other nations is determined by political considerations. Art and literature are looked on with suspicion as dangerous to the welfare of the state. Innocent social amusements are forbidden. Family life takes a peculiar colour for political reasons; the husband acquires a peculiar predominance; the wife is turned into a machine, bearing children for the good of the state. The state which Plato sketched in his *Republic* is an extreme instance of this enslavement of the individual to the

[1] Cosmas, *Topographia Christiana*, quoted in Lecky, *Hist. of Rationalism*, i. 269 (1910 ed.).

[2] As late as A.D. 1694 (ibid. ii. 318).

interests of the community; but the history of Sparta and Rome and, indeed, of most countries is full of such examples. From the various follies and sins and ruinous excesses to which he is so prone, man is in most cases guarded on the grounds that it is his duty to fear God and serve his country. Whole classes of actions are forbidden him. He moves in a narrow and carefully watched round of existence. He may not do this, he must do that. Maimed and mutilated, with one hand or one eye, he enters into the kingdom of heaven. This is true of nearly every nation except Greece. Here alone man was not sacrificed to his god or his country, but allowed to 'see life steadily and see it whole'. Elsewhere, reasons of state or reasons of religion perverted inquiry or narrowed its field; men were forbidden to think at all on some subjects, or compelled to hold certain prescribed views on them. Whole provinces of life were withdrawn from discussion—with many excellent consequences, but also with a restriction of the scope of truth, with a limitation of her chances of finding herself and coming by her own. But for the Greeks there were no barriers, no domains set apart where he might not trespass; everywhere he was free to act and think, to find truth or fall into error, to do right or to sin. In Greece neither religion nor politics were forces preventing him from seeing things as they are.

We are not, indeed, to suppose that free thought in religion went entirely unresented. Four notable prosecutions prove to us that the Athenians were jealous for their religion. Socrates was executed and Anaxagoras exiled for attacking traditional beliefs: Protagoras and Diagoras of Melos fled to avoid the consequences of a prosecution. But compare this record with the tale of the religious prosecutions of fifty years of the Italian

Renaissance. Between 1566 and 1619 'Carnesecchi was burned alive; Paleario was burned alive; Bruno was burned alive; these three at Rome. Vanini was burned at Toulouse. Valentino Gentile was executed by Calvinists at Berne. Campanella was cruelly tortured and imprisoned for twenty-seven years at Naples. Galileo was forced to humble himself before ignorant and arrogant monks, and to hide his head in a country villa. Sarpi felt the knife of an assassin. . . . In this way did Italy . . . devour her sons of light'.[1] These, of course, are famous victims. Symonds estimates that *in Spain alone,* between 1481 and 1525, 234,526 persons were condemned for heresy by the Inquisition.[2] Compare with this assiduous and sterilizing tyranny the occasional infractions of liberty of thought in Greece, and you will feel that the position of a Greek thinker was not worse than the position of Hobbes in the seventeenth century, not worse than that of Marmontel, who, in the Age of Reason, was sent to the Bastille for a supposed pasquinade on a duke, and hardly worse than that of German philosophers, who a century ago were chased from their chairs for unorthodoxy, and who even to-day are forbidden to profess publicly the doctrines of Social Democracy.

This Greek freedom of thought has several causes. For

[1] Symonds, *The Catholic Reaction,* ii. 138.

[2] Ibid. i. 196. Aristotle was threatened with a prosecution, nominally for atheism, really because of his Macedonian sympathies. If the prosecution of Diagoras fell in 415 B.C., as Diodorus says, it may have had political grounds, for he was a Melian. The Athenian indignation with the mutilators of the Hermae is not an instance against the view in the text, for it is not a persecution of free thought. If to-day some people defiled the altars in all the churches of London, it would excite popular indignation; but such indignation would not prove a general interference with liberty of speculation.

one thing, Greek philosophy was unendowed, and free speech is less easy to repress when it does not come from the pulpits and lecture-rooms of the state. But there are more fundamental reasons than this, reasons that lie in the nature of Greek religion itself.

Here we are on dangerous ground. The beliefs of sixth and fifth century Greece are not as yet fully ascertained. The country is but partially mapped out, and any one who sets foot in it risks losing his way. Once it was supposed that Greek religion was summed up in the worship of Zeus and Hera and the Olympian gods. Now we know of other worships; of Orphic mysteries, with a highly spiritual teaching; of a Dionysiac religion, emotional and enthusiastic, brought to Greece from the North. Even the Olympians are not quite what they seemed. Apollo, the seducer of Daphne and the patron of Troy, became through his prophets at Delphi a wide influence for good in Greek morals and politics. Finally we are told to-day that the most powerful religion in Athens was the propitiation of formidable Cthonian deities. Clearly we must define what we mean by Greek religion.

We are not trying to give a complete sketch of it. In fact, we shall have at present to ignore its noblest side altogether. We are simply asking *why thought was free in Athens during the years when persecution might have been expected*, that is during the fifth and fourth centuries. Hence we can ignore religions which were of later date. Further, we can ignore those which were held only by small sections of the community. If a religion is to persecute it must command a majority in the state. Quakers or Unitarians could never persecute. Nor (had they wished it) could Platonists, Peripatetics, or Stoics have done so.

Hence we are not here concerned with religions or philosophies such as these. We are concerned with the state religion, which Athenians learnt to reverence as children, which permeated the national literature, which crowned the high places of the city with its temples, which consecrated peace and war and everything solemn and ceremonial in civic life, which by its intimate connexion with these things acquired that support of instinctive sentiment which is stronger than any moral or intellectual sanction. Orphism does not satisfy these conditions; nor do the Chthonian deities. The religion we are looking for is the Olympian worship.

The Olympians have of late fallen into undeserved discredit, because we are surprised that a fellow citizen of Aeschylus could still worship such queer divinities. But our surprise proves nothing. The religious beliefs of nations are always disappointing those who apply to them the tests of absolute reasonableness. One can only judge of them by seeing what members of the nation say and do. In any epoch different stages of belief coexist. Propositions which would not command intellectual assent are still supported by sentiment and habit. Dead beliefs, like dead men, never die, but by a law of heredity haunt the blood of late-descended generations. So it was in Athens. The devout Pindar, who rejects a story of divine cannibalism, represents Apollo as a dissembler and a seducer.[1] The devout Aeschylus, who created for himself so lofty a theism, in some passages speaks of God as deceitful and cruel.[2] The devout Sophocles, who wrote that magnificent hymn to the eternal laws, calls one member of the Pantheon 'the

[1] *Pyth.* 9.

[2] Fragment quoted by Plato, *Rep.* 383; and *P. V. passim.*

god whom gods dishonour ' and invites his fellow deities to annihilate him.[1] Such inconsistencies will not surprise us when we remember how men with the New Testament in their hands have allowed themselves to be inspired by the barbarities of the Old. Anyhow, the fact remains. The names of the Olympians fill the pages of Greek tragedy. They, and not any Chthonian worship, excite the attacks of Euripides. Plato, when he wishes to plan an ideal education, deals before anything with the active dangers to the morality of the young, which according to him the Olympian theology affords. Finally, the Olympians continue to be worshipped in Greece as long as paganism survives, and their frailties remain effective weapons in the hands of sceptics within the fold like Lucian, and of enemies, like Augustine, without it.

And now, to return to our main question—Why did this religion leave thought so free ?

Firstly, it was anthropomorphic, and anthropomorphic religions are essentially plastic. They admit of criticism and remodelling. They almost invite it. A glance at the Greek gods will show us why.

Homer and Hesiod, says Xenophanes, ' ascribed the vices of mankind to the gods.' They made deities in their own image, in the likeness of an image of corruptible man. *Sua cuique deus fit dira cupido.* ' Each man's fearful passion becomes his god.' Yes, and not passions only, but every impulse, every aspiration, every humour, every virtue, every whim. In each of his activities the Greek found something wonderful, and called it God : the hearth at which he warmed himself and cooked his food, the street in which his house stood, the horse he rode, the cattle he pastured, the wife he married, the

[1] *O. T.* 1st chorus.

child that was born to him, the plague of which he died or from which he recovered, each suggested a deity, and he made one to preside over each. So too with qualities and powers more abstract. Violence, Fear, Revolution, Sport, Drunkenness, Democracy, Madness, Envy, Revelling, Persuasion, Sleep, Hunger, are personified and in some cases worshipped. Everything has its worship, even 'the Unknown God'. (That is why, viewing his religion, it is possible to represent the Greek as a miracle of vice or of virtue.) A Greek wished to be drunk, Dionysus was his patron; to be vicious, and he turned to Aphrodite Pandemos. He was a thief, and could rely on the help of Hermes; he had a passion for purity, and there was the worship of Artemis. Gods enough; but they are not original beings with independent powers. They are the shadows of the man who made them, called into existence to patronize the actions of their creator, to utter the words which he puts into their mouth, to smile to order on his faults and virtues with benignant and unfaltering complaisance.[1]

This is enough to explain why there was no religious tyranny in Greece. Gods of this kind were unlikely to have a drastic influence on men's lives. Their origin and character weakened, without actually destroying, their power over their devotees. They were after all only the work of men's hands, and the men instinctively took liberties with their creations. Aristophanes, who was a

[1] According to Mr. Bent (*The Cyclades*, p. 373), there is at the present day in Paros a convent dedicated to the Drunken S. George. 'On November 3, the Pariotes usually tap their new-made wine, and get drunk; they have a dance and a scene of revelry in front of this church, which is hallowed by the presence of the priests.' The spirit which created the Olympians is not dead yet.

supporter of the established religion, exhibits Dionysus on the stage before the assembled Athenian public in the mixed character of a blusterer, a coward, and a buffoon;[1] and Dionysus was, as Miss Harrison points out, the god of a genuinely spiritual worship. He treats Zeus with equal disrespect, connecting him in one place with an intolerably blasphemous theory of rain, in another arguing with admirable gravity that Heracles is sure to be disinherited as an illegitimate son of the King of Heaven.[2] So with writers less reckless than Aristophanes, and on stages less light-hearted than that of Comedy. It is told of Agesipolis that 'after consulting the oracle at Olympia, he went on to ask the God at Delphi whether he was of the same mind as his father, implying that it would be disgraceful to contradict him'.[3] And Theognis, in remarking on the inequalities of divine justice, addresses Zeus thus, *Ζεῦ φίλε, θαυμάζω σε*, 'Dear Zeus, I wonder at you.'[4] It is the tone in which a boy might speak of his elder brother—Pindar thought the gods *were* our brothers—and it suggests that, on occasions when heaven said one thing and the people wished another, the Greek gods would bow to public opinion.

This was the penalty which the Greeks paid for seeing divinity in many forms. They gained in breadth but lost in intensity. Their God was too much the creation of his worshippers ever to become absolute. He was a constitutional monarch whose subjects never quite forgot that they had put him on his throne. In theory their king, he was in fact their representative, bound to carry out their desires. And among these was the desire to be free.

[1] *Frogs*.
[2] *Birds*, 1649 f.
[3] Ar. *Rhet.* 2. 23 (tr. Welldon).
[4] fr. 78.

That is one influence which made Greek religion work loose. A second is akin to it. There was no Greek Bible.

This makes for liberty at the outset. A Bible has immense advantages for those who can use it, but for the world at large it has its dangers. Think how easily the written word, interpreted with the rigour of ignorance, can cramp truth. The Psalmist had said that the sun 'runneth about from one end of heaven to the other' and that 'the foundations of the round world are so firmly fixed that they cannot be moved'. 'How then could Galileo maintain that the earth moves about the sun? Here was the plain warrant of Holy Writ for the contrary. S. Paul had told us that 'men are made to live on the face of the earth. It follows that they do not live on more faces than one or upon the back. With such a passage before his eyes, a Christian should not even speak of the Antipodes'.[1] So mediaeval theologians argued, using the Bible not to make alive but to petrify. And in countless ways less gross than these, casual remarks misunderstood, crude conceptions of a primitive age, moral precepts applicable to a primitive people, were invested with divine authority and forged into fetters for liberty of thought, simply because they were found in a sacred book.

From such dangers the Greeks were free. They had no Bible. We often call Homer the Greek Bible; but the phrase is misleading, for Homer had not the peremptory authority of a Law once ordained and for ever binding, but the subtle influence of a great book which is in every one's hands. The Delphic oracles come nearest to the Jewish Law, for they were the direct commands of

[1] *Op. cit.* quoted in Lecky, *Hist. of Rationalism*, i. 267 ff.

Apollo. But they never became engines of tyranny, for they were delivered to meet special situations, and were strictly temporary in their application. The Orphic cult had, it is true, sacred writings. But there was no Book of the great Olympian gods, or of any other deities worshipped in Greece. Of Apollo and Zeus many legends were current, but no one had troubled to harmonize them, and their worshippers, without insisting on precise definition, were content with a general εὐσέβεια. Hence Plato could invent an account of Creation to support a particular polity, because as he says, 'we do not know the truth about antiquity.'[1] His words may remind us how differently the Jew was situated, with his book of Genesis, and its hard-and-fast account of the origin of the world. And so generally; thought in Greece could work unchecked, for there was no exact standard by which to check it.

From this came an attitude to religion very unlike that of the Jews. The Jew accepted the God that was revealed to him: the Greek thought his gods out. If the Jew was in doubt, it was easy for him to decide. His God had issued commands, and were they not written in the books of Moses? But the Greek had no such authorities to appeal to. He was thrown back on his own reason, his own sense of what was right and true. This was the workshop in which his beliefs were hammered out. That is why we find Plato expurgating the heavenly records, giving them new turns and new interpretations, making and unmaking theology to his liking. If something in traditional theology offends his moral sense, he openly discards it.[2] And so with writers less rationalistic than

[1] *Republic*, 382, 414 f.
[2] e.g. in *Republic*, books 2 and 3 *passim*.

Plato. Pindar was orthodox and conservative. Yet coming across an ugly legend about the gods, he simply denies it. 'I will speak contrariwise to them that have gone before me. . . . To me it is impossible to call one of the blessed gods cannibal; I keep aloof.'[1] He will have nothing to do with a story that revolts his moral sense. Though it have all tradition on its side, still it must be false: Pindar trusts his own instincts and throws it over. Such an attitude may be matched in Hebrew literature, but it is not common there. On the whole the Jew submitted to tradition, while the Greek trusted in himself and his reason.

Let us take one famous example. Greek and Hebrew literature each contain a story of a just man who was visited by heaven with undeserved misfortune. Job, 'a perfect and upright man that feared God and eschewed evil,' lost his goods, his family, and his health by a sudden decree of heaven. Prometheus, the great Titan, who saw the human race perishing unregarded, pitied it, risked the divine anger, gave fire to men, and in punishment was nailed by Zeus to a precipice on the Caucasus. The two sufferers are in much the same case: Prometheus suffers, because he followed the dictates of mercy; Job suffers in spite of his purity of life. If either of them deserved his fate, it was Prometheus. And each story follows the same course. Both men lament their sufferings and proclaim their innocence. Friends visit them and counsel submission to the will of heaven. Prometheus replies that his offence was deliberate and that he will never yield to Zeus; Job insists that he has done no wrong. So far the stories coincide. But observe how different are the morals which the Greek and the Hebrew

[1] *Pyth.* I. 53.

writer draw respectively from their misfortunes. A whirlwind comes up out of the desert, and a Voice out of it speaks to Job, 'convincing him,' as the chapter's heading quaintly says, 'of ignorance and imbecility.' What is he with his knowledge that he should question the dispensations of God? Where was Job when God laid the foundations of the world? Can he make snow or ice or rain: can he guide and order the constellations? What does he know of the Almighty and His ways? And Job meekly accepts the sentence. 'Behold, I am vile. . . . I have uttered that I understood not, . . . things too wonderful for me, which I knew not . . . Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' Observe that God has not justified his punishment nor Job admitted his guilt. The man has simply retracted and humbled himself. His sufferings remain mysterious and unexplained. But who is he that he should question God's ways?

This solution, we may safely prophesy, would have been unintelligible to the Greek; Aeschylus does not adopt it. 'God convinceth Job of ignorance and imbecility:' there is no trace of such a finale in the case of Prometheus. When Zeus commands and threatens, Prometheus retorts with an insulting defiance: he does what Job will not do, he curses God. And he curses him with impunity or something more. Unlike the Jew, Aeschylus concluded his story, not with the unconditional surrender of the weaker party, but with his practical justification. Time and fate bring Hercules who kills the tormenting vulture; Zeus is persuaded to strike the chains off Prometheus, and receives in return information of a secret danger that menaces his throne. But the Titan is not abased nor the god exalted: a treaty is struck between the two, and

they come to terms.[1] From first to last it never occurs to Aeschylus that Prometheus may have had a narrow view of justice, and that when the accounts were summed Zeus might turn out to have been right after all. Without a suspicion that it might be fallible, he brings God and the Titan before the bar of human reason. He judges the two in that court without a presumption in favour of either, and when God appears unjust, unhesitatingly condemns him.[2]

How different in all this from the deities of Hellenism is Jehovah! How different a position He occupies in the life of His people! He is a jealous and arbitrary God: He dominates and dwarfs His worshippers. Jehovah IS before His people were, they know Him only by His revelation of Himself, and they are in the hollow of His hand. The Greek said of Apollo and Zeus, they are: Jehovah said to His people, I AM: Jewish writers show a self-submission and self-abasement to Him which is quite un-Greek. They are obsessed with the sense of Him. He is the inspiration of all that is great and memorable in their writings. There are thirty-nine books in the Old Testament. All but one are continually occupied with the relations of God to man; nineteen—the Book of Job, the Psalms, the prophetic books—have no other subject. It is not so with Greek literature. There does not lie behind that as an unchanging background, a struggle between the will of man and the will of God.

[1] Perhaps it is rash to base an argument on the plot of the *Prometheus Unbound* which is lost. But no modern writer, so far as I know, has suggested that it justified the original conduct of Zeus.

[2] I have ventured to borrow the idea of this illustration from the late Professor Butcher's *Harvard Lectures*, giving it a different application.

It has no repeated protests against a backsliding people, whose ears continually wax dull and their hearts gross. And this is not due to any exceptional righteousness of the Greeks. Rather it is because religion was not the same thing for Homer or Aeschylus as for Moses or Isaiah. In their scheme of the world God was not everything. He was a part of their life, an important part, but not more. He was there to lend His countenance to their occupations and interests, but not to direct, dominate, and override them. So it is even with the most religious Greeks. When Plato constructs his ideal city, the first word in his pages is not God, the first thought of the writer is not how he shall please Him. Much later in the treatise do we come to such considerations. Read the *Republic* by the side of one of the prophetic books, and the difference of temper is apparent.

The two towns Athens and Jerusalem well reflect the respective character of their religions. Glorious are the temples that crown the Acropolis and give a consecration to the life that moved beneath them. But they are there only as elements in a harmonious whole, one beauty among many others. The view from the Mount of Olives suggests very different thoughts. Across the valley on its hill lies Jerusalem, a confused mass of domes and towers and flat roofs, so closely huddled that the eye sees no trace of open spaces or intersecting streets. For a moment the city looks like one of the less attractive Eastern towns, a city of burrows scraped out for a people without imagination or ideal or sense of beauty. So it looks, or would look but for certain open spaces, just within the city wall and before the houses begin, huge courtyards with domed buildings and a few cypresses rising from their pavement. They are the only great

thing which the eye sees; Jerusalem is dwarfed beside them; and the huge mosques within them seem lost in their spaces. These are the Temple Courts. This is the spot which the Jew, while he kept his town mean and unlovely, consecrated to the worship of Jehovah; these are the courts of the House of his God.

It is difficult to speak in this way without giving the impression that the Greeks were irreligious. Of course, as a whole they were quite the reverse; witness their consternation at the mutilation of the Hermae. But they were religious in the way in which the average churchgoer of to-day is religious. Perhaps they would not have gone so far as to agree with the late Rev. Mark Pattison that religion is a good servant but a bad master;[1] but there were many other interests in their life besides God. None of them were religious as Augustine or Pascal or Newman or Tolstoi understood the word. It is hard to parallel from Greek literature passages like the following: 'there are two Gods. There is the God people generally believe in—a God who has to *serve them* (sometimes in very refined ways, perhaps by merely giving them peace of mind). This God does not exist. But the God whom people forget—the God whom *we all have to serve*—does exist and is the prime cause of our existence and of all that we perceive;'[2] or, again, the Psalmist's words: 'so foolish was I and ignorant, even as it were a beast before thee. . . . Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 97.

[2] Tolstoi. I have been unable to re-identify the passage. Contrast Homer's argument for religion, 'all men have need of the gods.' *Od.* 3. 48.

strength of my heart and my portion for ever.' What Greek ever thought of his religion as Pascal thinks of Conversion[1]: 'La véritable conversion consiste à s'anéantir devant cet être universel, qu'on a irrité tant de fois, et qui peut vous perdre légitimement à toute heure; à reconnaître qu'on ne peut rien sans lui, et qu'on a mérité rien de lui que sa disgrâce'? or as Newman thinks of Catholicism: 'I speak of it as teaching the ruined nature of man; his utter inability to gain heaven by anything he can do himself; the moral certainty of his losing his soul if left to himself; the simple absence of all rights and claims on the part of the creature in the presence of the Creator; the illimitable claims of the Creator on the service of the creature'?[2] and so forth.

These passages are conceived in the genuine temper of Isaiah and of S. Paul, but where shall we match them in Greek? The nearest we can come is Plato's saying that men are the 'chattels of God';[3] or the famous hymn of the Stoic Cleanthes. With Plato we shall deal later. As for the hymn, it must be remembered that Stoicism was a third-century growth, its founders and chief teachers of Asiatic origin, and the God of Cleanthes an impersonal power. And I think that most people who read the hymn will feel that, in spite of a surface resemblance, its words are infinitely removed from the intellectual self-abnegation of Newman or the intense passion of the Psalmist.

Here, then, are three influences which fostered παρρησία in Athens; the absence of a Bible; an instinct for rationalism; and the temper engendered by an anthropomorphic

[1] *Pensées*, 508 (ed. Brunschvigg).
[2] *Scope and Nature of University Education*, c. 7.
[3] *Phaedo*, 62.

religion. They pass into one another, and together they explain why, if anything prevented the Greek from seeing life as it is, it was not his gods.

If religion left the Greeks free, so did politics. Though civic life and private life so nearly coincided, though the Greek state claimed from its citizens so much more than does our own, yet the individual never became a mere cipher on a census paper, but kept and asserted his own individuality.

Political individualism is writ large across the history of Greece. At its worst it appears in the want of self-control, the inability to unite, the reckless selfishness, which were so disagreeably common. It was not rare for an expelled citizen to join his city's enemies and attempt to ruin her. Oligarchs and democrats assaulted the homes from which they had been banished; Greek exiles instigated and accompanied both Persian invasions; Alcibiades one day commanded an Athenian fleet, the next was pointing out at Sparta the weak places in his country's defences. As he pleasantly says, 'Having been once distinguished as a lover of my country, I now cast in my lot with her worst foes, and attack her with all my might.'[1]

But Greek individualism took better forms than these. Once it brought 10,000 Greeks back from the Euphrates to their homes. Nothing is more instructive in that history of Xenophon which has introduced so many schoolboys to Greek, than the organization of the army; nothing is more characteristically Greek. It is not an army on the march, but a parliament of 10,000 members. If a crisis arises, the soldiers meet in assembly, the generals

[1] Thuc. 6. 92.

lay the situation before them, speakers argue pro and con, the army votes, and the march is resumed. Generals who are incompetent or suspect are publicly impeached; the army acquits, fines, or puts them to death. It sounds like a dream of Gilbert and Sullivan. Yet the Ten Thousand marched and voted themselves in wintry weather over many miles of the most difficult country in the world. That was individualism too.

This spirit, present doubtless from the beginning, became active in the seventh and following centuries, when the growth of tyrannies made Greece feel how much was lost with freedom. Herodotus, who recounts the rise and fall of many of these princedoms, tells why they were unpopular. They were oppressive. 'The tyrants upset ancestral customs, and do violence to women, and put men to death without a trial.'[1] But they were also alien to the temper of the Greeks. The Athenians, says Herodotus, while the Peisistratidae ruled them, were no better fighters than their neighbours, but when set free they immediately surpassed them: which 'shows that in their subjection they were purposely slack, because they were toiling for a master, but when they obtained liberty each man eagerly worked for himself'.[2] It is noticeable that the word he uses for liberty is *ἰσηγορίη*—'freedom of speech'—they were not content with mere freedom of action. The same craving is audible in the quaint reply of the Spartans to a Persian governor, who urged them to submit to Xerxes: 'you do not know what you are advising us to do, Hydarnes, for you know what it is to be a slave, but the sweetness of freedom you have never tasted. If you felt it, you would tell us to fight for it, not with spears only but with axes.'[3]

[1] Hdt. 3. 80. [2] Id. 5. 78. [3] Id. 7. 135.

But it was Pericles and the democracy which developed the conception of παρρησία, on which indeed any real democracy must depend. Under written laws, says Euripides,

> Weak men cast back the lie
> On prosperous calumny; the poorer sort,
> If justice back their plea, confound the strong;
> And freedom in our parliament proclaims,
> 'Who can depose wise counsel for the state?'
> Then he that will, sits silent; he that will,
> Speaks, and wins glory. Can equality
> Go further?[1]

These words are put into the mouth of a king of Athens, and Euripides, who put them there, speaks elsewhere of free speech as the 'one great thing', and shudders at the thought of a man whose tongue is tied. 'A slave is he that may not speak his thought.'[2] A few years before Euripides wrote these words, a defeated and dispirited Athenian fleet was trapped far away from home. As the sailors embarked for a last attempt to break through the enemy, their commander made a final appeal to the captains. His first words to them are significant. 'He reminded them that they were the inhabitants of the freest country in the world, and how in Athens there was no interference with the daily life of any man.'[3]

Certainly there was little interference with what any man said. Greek Comedy gives an idea of the lengths to which παρρησία might go unchecked. The criticisms of the late South African War which drew on the heads of Mr. Lloyd George and others the ready missiles of angry crowds, were mild in comparison with those which Aristophanes was permitted to make in the State Theatre

[1] *Suppl.* 433 f. [2] *Phoen.* 391. Cp. *Ion*, 672; *Hipp.* 422.
[3] Thuc. 7. 69.

on the struggle of his countrymen against the Peloponnesians. Suppose that it was the custom in this country for plays to be presented to the public 'on Easter Monday, in the Albert Hall, under the patronage of the State, and before an audience comprising not merely ministers of all kinds and degrees, but students from the Universities and pupils from the Schools'.[1] Suppose that while England was engaged in a desperate war, some poet exhibiting at this festival advocated peace and denounced war in no measured terms, charged Mr. Chamberlain with peculation, displayed John Bull as a fat, greedy, credulous, ignorant old man, cheated and robbed by the government in power; suppose that Lord Roberts was brought in person on the stage, caricatured as a dressy braggart, publicly flouted by an impertinent crowd, and finally carried off to hospital desperately wounded, while the peace-party, with derisive shouts at his misfortunes, retired to a luxurious dinner; suppose that a modern author dared to write such a play, would an English public tolerate it for a moment? And yet during the Peloponnesian War, Aristophanes, presenting on the stage the Athenian public, its chief statesmen, and one of its most eminent generals, caricatured them in no less gross a way.[2]

No doubt Comedy had peculiar licence in Greece. But that does not alter the fact of the licence. The rule of *παρρησία* held always in Athens. Not in the times of worst disaster, not when Athens was fighting no longer for victory but for life, not when the timbers of her fleet

[1] Verrall, *Four Plays of Euripides*.

[2] The criticisms on Cleon *passim*, on Demos in the *Knights*, and on Lamachus in the *Acharnians* are the basis of the preceding analogy.

were breaking up on the beach at Syracuse and her army rotting in its quarries, not after Aegospotami itself, was free speech restricted. The ecclesia still met, the herald still asked τίς ἀγορεύειν βούλεται;—Who wishes to speak?[1]

This was the practice of Athens. It followed a definite, deliberate, and clearly-expounded theory. All the political thinkers of Greece, with the exception of Plato, speak of the state as existing for the individual. One of them, a friend and admirer of Pericles, who knew from within the politics on which he wrote, has left in writing the ideal of the Athenian democracy. It remains to us unaged as the charter of democracy, the New Testament of Liberalism.

In the Funeral Speech which he puts in the lips of Pericles, Thucydides makes him declare his conception of what Athens is and what every state ought to be. The complete freedom of the Athenian citizen strikes us at once in reading the speech, the absence of any attempt to make him good by law, the absence of any safeguards against want of patriotism, and indeed of any fear of it. We are taken into an atmosphere very different from modern political thought. There is no talk of class jealousy and class selfishness, to be remedied by a system of checks and balances and counterbalances, no talk of compulsory military service necessary to inculcate

[1] Certain attempts were, however, made to restrict comic licence. A law was passed in 440 forbidding the treatment of cotemporary politics, but was repealed in 437. There was a similar enactment in 416, forbidding ὀνομαστὶ κωμῳδεῖν, personal attacks: yet in 414 Aristophanes wrote the *Birds*. There was possibly another restricting law at the end of the fifth century: but in any case Comedy then abandons its licence. It is characteristic of the Thirty Tyrants that they made certain restrictions on intellectual freedom (Xen. *Mem.* 1. 2. 31).

patriotism and to discipline and direct the irregular energies of the mob, no talk of contributory pensions desirable to breed an idea of thrift, of a licensing bill designed to protect citizens from drunkenness, of Church schools and a religious education, without which man will relapse into the mud from which he came. Pericles lives in an ideal, perhaps a too ideal, world. It has not occurred to him to fear that amusements will distract the Athenian from his duty, and any suspicion of them is totally absent from his speech. He regards such things as an essential element in national life. 'We provide plenty of means for the mind to refresh itself from business; we have regular games and sacrifices throughout the year.'[1] Nor is he afraid that culture and education will sap the roots of character, making men effeminate, better at thinking than deciding. 'We cultivate refinement without extravagance, and knowledge without effeminacy.'[2]

There was a state in Greece, where such things were thought dangerous. Sparta was organized on more than Roman principles, and its citizens were brought up by a series of drills, messes and petty regulations to be devoted servants of the state. Athens must have seemed a strange place to a Spartan visitor. To start with, it would be odd that he should be there so freely, for in his own country they were apt to have ξενηλασίαι, periodical expulsions of foreigners. And then how different was the life of an Athenian from that to which he was accustomed at home! At the age of seven he had been taken away

[1] Thuc. 2. 38. 1.

[2] Ibid. 40. 1. Newman (*University Sketches*) paraphrases the words thus: 'They cultivated the fine arts with too much taste to be expensive, and studied the sciences with too much point to become effeminate.'

from his family to the Syssition, a kind of ancient public school, and thenceforward 'lived habitually in public, always under the fetters and observances of a rule partly military, partly monastic—estranged from the independence of a separate home—seeing his wife, during the first years after marriage, only by stealth, and maintaining little peculiar relation with his children. The supervision not only of his fellow-citizens, but also of authorized censors or captains nominated by the state, was perpetually acting on him; his day was passed in public exercises and meals, his nights in the public barrack to which he belonged'.[1] Bare feet, a single coat summer and winter, floggings at a local shrine (he had seen boys die under them), stinted food, and for recreation hunting and dancing—these had been his lot since a child. After all, thought the Spartans, you must make men patriotic, and what other way is there of doing it?

Pericles thought that there were other ways, and by name condemns this Spartan system. 'In the matter of education, whereas they (the Spartans) from early youth are always undergoing laborious exercises which are to make them brave, we live at ease, and yet are equally ready to face the dangers which they face. If we prefer to meet danger with a light heart and without laborious training, with a courage which is gained by habit and not enforced by law, are we not greatly the gainers?'[2] Leave the individual to himself, and he can be trusted to do his duty, is the idea of Pericles; coercion, restriction, prohibition are words not found in his political theory. Trust in the people tempered by caution, was Mr. Gladstone's definition of Liberalism. Leave out the last three words and you have the principles of Pericles.

[1] Grote, *Hist. of Greece*, ii. 298. [2] Thuc. 2. 39. §§ 2. 3.

That was the Greek ideal—unrestricted liberty. Is it wonderful that with such principles the Greek mind remained undistorted ?

This freedom was a rare privilege in antiquity. Think for a moment of Rome. Plutarch said of its people that they 'were of that mind, that they would not have men marry, beget children, live privately by themselves, and make feasts and banquets at their pleasure, but that they should stand in fear to be reproved and inquired of by the magistrates ; and that it was not good to give every one liberty to do what they would, following his own lust and fancy '.[1]

This was Plutarch's view of the Romans, and this, too, was the view of the consul who mounted the rostra one morning in the year 186 B.C. and announced to his hearers the measures which the senate proposed to take for the suppression of the Bacchanalia. It was a question of a religious society for the worship of Dionysus, which had used its meetings for gross indecency and, further, for a conspiracy against social order. A bad business, doubtless ; and the consul justly regarded it as a menace to morality and subversive of the state. But note the terms in which he rates his audience. 'Your ancestors were unwilling that even you should meet accidentally or at random ; unless it was the army led out for election purposes, or an assembly of the people summoned by tribunes, or a meeting called by a magistrate. Where a crowd was gathered, they were of opinion that there should be a regular officer to control them.'[2] We are very far away here from the ideals of Pericles.

[1] *Vit. Catonis*, 16 (tr. North).

[2] Livy, 39. 15.

The consul's next words are also instructive. 'There is nothing more specious or more fallacious than a vicious piety. When divine authority is made an excuse for crime, we become afraid to punish human wickedness, lest in doing so we violate some law of heaven with which it is associated.' These sentiments tempt us to compare the Roman view of the Bacchanalia with the fortunes of Dionysus in Hellas, and to draw a moral from the contrast. In Greece, too, the god's worship was an *advecta religio,* which had thrust itself in among the primitive religions. There, too—though free from the gross immorality and political Mafia of the Italian Bacchanalia—it was celebrated with revels on the hills, of which drunkenness was a general and immorality a not uncommon feature. Yet when Pentheus, taking the consul's point of view, forbade the women of his city to go roaming the hills, an Athenian dramatist represented him on the stage as rewarded for his ill-timed love of order by being torn in pieces at his mother's hands. Though they may not represent the poet's own view, the words are striking which Euripides gives to the speakers who oppose the action of Pentheus. They remind him that he is coming in conflict with a god, that, after all, wine makes man forget his sorrows, and that, if women want to be immoral, they will be so without going on the mountains:

> Receive this spirit, whosoe'er he be
> To Thebes in glory. Greatness manifold
> Is all about him; and the tale is told
> That this is he who first to man did give
> The grief-assuaging vine. Oh, let him live;
> For if he die, then Love herself is slain
> And nothing joyous in the world again.[1]

So, with a mixture of sensuous Epicureanism and the

[1] *Bacchae,* 769 f. (tr. Murray).

time-honoured arguments of Liberalism, the Bacchanals are defended. Imagine the grim face of the Roman consul as he listened to such a plea.

We must not press this parallel too closely. A wide gulf lay between the Greek and Italian worships of Bacchus, and Euripides was not a statesman, but a poet. But the different attitude of Romans and Greeks in these matters is incontestable. The Romans did not encourage novelties in thought or religion or applaud specious phrases about toleration. Pleas for freedom of inquiry, for an untrammelled Art, for the rights of Literature, fell unheard on their ears. Time and again foreign religions were sent packing from Italy to their homes across the sea. Cato would have done as much for Greek ambassadors, and begged the senate to dismiss them. 'He openly found fault in the senate, that the ambassadors were long there and had no despatch; considering also they were cunning men and could easily persuade what they would. And if there were no other reason, this alone might persuade them to determine some answer for them, and so to send them home again to their schools, to teach their children of Greece, and to let alone the children of Rome, that they might learn to obey the laws and the senate, as they had done before. Now he spake this to the senate because he generally hated philosophy, and of ambition despised the muses and knowledge of the Greek tongue.'[1]

Censorious interference with private liberty on grounds like these was common at Rome. In 161 B.C. the praetors were empowered to dismiss from Rome Greek philosophers and rhetoricians. Some Epicurean teachers were expelled—probably in 184. As late as 92 B.C. the censors issued the following edict: 'We have

[1] Plutarch, *Vit. Cat.* 22 (tr. North).

been informed that there are men who have instituted a new form of teaching, and that the young go to their schools: that these persons have described themselves as Latin rhetoricians: that young men waste whole days with them. Our fathers decided what their sons should learn and what schools they should frequent. These new schools, which are against the custom and tradition of our fathers, seem to us neither desirable nor right. We therefore think it proper to indicate our sentiments to the owners of these schools and their pupils.' The stiff sentiments and curt diction take us into a world where the state was first and the individual nowhere. His rights did not go further than the duty to obey.

This contrast between Greece and Rome is easy of explanation. Many causes may have been at work, but chief among them is the different history of the two peoples. For 600 years, almost without a breathing-space, repeatedly defeated and struggling each moment for existence, Rome fought her way through to victory. From their low town her early citizens could see the hills of their enemies and the fortresses which barred each pass. Etruscans, Latins, Aequians, Volscians, Hernicans, Veientines, Samnites, Gauls—she had to meet and beat them all; and after them greater antagonists, Pyrrhus, Hannibal, Philip, Antiochus, and the armies of Africa and the East. This age-long struggle did not mould a tolerant character. Constancy, energy, resolution, massive weight were the qualities required from Roman citizens. Their strength was not to be the strength of pliancy; they were to be iron men. It was not for them to talk, still less to doubt. They were not to quibble about the existence of the gods whom they needed to give victory or about the rights of the individual against

the state, when the city might be sacked in the next twenty-four hours; or about the nature of the universe, while the Hernicans were burning the crops. Action was wanted, and not argument, which would only weaken action.

Greece was more—or less—happy. Doubtless she had had her period of stress, but it had passed easily and briefly into the chequered peace of historical times. No memories linger in fifth-century Athens of ages of fiery trial, for Greek history was not *populi iam octingentesimum bellantis annum res*,[1] 'the story of a people who had been 800 years at war.' And the character of the Greeks was the softer for it. They had not been obliged to practise restraint and self-suppression, till restraint and self-suppression became a second nature. They were more instinctive and natural, and therefore more free. On the face of Roman life, as on the grim features of Roman statesmen, is stamped the hardness, the instinct to control and forbid, which we observe in people to whom the world has been hard. But the face of Greece has something of the serenity which her sculptors loved to portray.

We have been betrayed into a comparison of Greece and Rome. But it is not a criticism. Our sympathies here will go according to our nature, and it does not concern us which was right. The important thing is that in theory and, on the whole, in practice the Greek state avoided interfering with its citizens. Here, too, the Greek was left free, free to see life steadily and see it whole. Neither priests nor politicians tyrannized over him.

[1] Livy's description of Rome, 9. 18.

CHAPTER III

THE NOTE OF DIRECTNESS

FREEDOM from political and religious restraint is almost necessary to the highest development of thought. Philosophy and science are impossible unless the human mind is free to go sounding on its perilous way: and literature as a whole is likely to gain by such liberty. But literature can thrive very well in an air where philosophy and science would sicken. Some of the greatest historical writing in the world was done under a strict theocracy and is coloured with the prejudices of a close priesthood. In Greece itself genius is found apart from freedom of thought. Pindar was a member of a priestly house; anything but speculative in his outlook on life; orthodox almost to narrowness in religion and politics; a strong adherent of tradition; a firm believer in the high prerogative of birth and wealth. Yet though he could never have made the hazardous speculations of Democritus or Anaxagoras, he is among the greatest poets of the world; in spite of narrowness, his poems are a truthful 'criticism of life'. So when Matthew Arnold or Goethe tells us that the Greeks were singularly 'truthful', we must not suppose that they were so, only because they enjoyed *παρρησία*: we must look further than we have done for the quality that enabled them to see life steadily and see it whole.

In his chapter on 'Classical Landscape' Ruskin has drawn attention to a certain quality in the Greeks which determined their view of nature. While the modern painter endeavours to 'express something which he, as

a living creature, imagines in the lifeless object', the Greeks were 'content with expressing the unimaginary and actual qualities' of scenery. A wave to Homer 'from the beginning to the end of it, do what it might, was still nothing else than salt water. . . . Black or clear, monstrous or violet-coloured, cold salt water it is always, and nothing but that'. And so it is at all times, when he speaks of nature. The Greek sees no more in a landscape than is obviously there. To him a mountain is a mountain, a tree a tree, a flower a flower.

Ruskin has given some admirable illustrations of this, which may be read in *Modern Painters*.[1] Here I only propose to give one of my own; it is an effective illustration, because it allows a comparison between the practice of an ancient poet and a modern poetess. Mrs. Browning in one of her poems describes a seagull thus:

> Familiar with the waves and free
> As if their own white foam were he,
> His heart upon the heart of ocean
> Lay learning all its mystic motion,
> And throbbing to the throbbing sea.
>
> And such a brightness in his eye
> *As if the ocean and the sky*
> *Within him had lit up and nurst*
> *A soul God gave him not at first,*
> *To comprehend their majesty.*

The bird is captured and taken to an inland garden, where it dies.

> But flowers of earth were pale to him
> Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim;
> And when earth's dew around him lay
> He thought of ocean's wingèd spray,
> And his eye waxèd sad and dim.
>
> . . . .

[1] See the chapters *Of the Pathetic Fallacy*, and *Of Classical Landscape*.

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmuring,
In ocean's stead his heart to move
And teach him what was human love—
He thought it a strange, mournful thing.

He lay down in his grief to die,
(First looking to the sea-like sky
That hath no waves !), because, alas !
Our human touch did on him pass,
And with our touch, our agony.

No one would deny that this poem has a certain grace and charm. But go down to the cliffs and watch the white birds hovering between you and the sea, filling the air with their hungry clamour, or skimming over the water near the rocks where they nest. Then read the italicized lines above and ask if these wild children of nature have really had or could ever have the emotions and experiences which the poetess attributes to her seamew. Down by the water, where we are in touch with the thing described, Alcman's lines would surely occur to us, not only as a more faithful picture of truth, but also as a far more sympathetic rendering of the seabird's charm. He, too, had watched the seabird off the rocks of his home, but saw in it only the bird ' that flies over the blossom of the swell in the halcyon's company, with a careless heart, the sea-purple bird of spring '.[1]

We need not discuss the difficult question how far Mrs. Browning's treatment of her subject is justified. All we have to notice is the Greek directness of Alcman. A bird is a bird to him and nothing more. These lines of his are literal descriptions of fact, except for two touches. But no one who has seen the foam breaking white on the crest of a green swell, will object that the poet likens it to the

[1] fr. 26. *ὅς τ' ἐπὶ κύματος ἄνθος ἅμ' ἀλκυόνεσσι ποτᾶται*
νηλεγὲς ἦτορ ἔχων, ἁλιπόρφυρος εἴαρος ὄρνις.

blossoming of a plant among its leaves: and no one who has ever watched seagulls flying will complain that he allows them 'a careless heart'. For the rest, he sees the seagull as it looks—we will not beg the question by saying 'as it is'. He takes it at its surface value, and sees what an unspoilt and happy child might see in it. In Ruskin's words, he is content with 'expressing the unimaginary and actual qualities of the object itself'. He looks at it with directness.

Ruskin was satisfied with tracing the influence of this 'directness' on the Greek's view of nature. But we must trace it further than that. We shall find that it affects his attitude to more important things than scenery or seamews. It was a way of thought, a manner of looking at life. It guided the eyes of the Greeks and drew their attention to certain aspects of things. It afforded a focus, within which they saw everything in strong relief, outside which they saw only darkness and confusion. It determined their whole idea of the world. For everywhere they took things at their obvious value, and saw them, so to speak, naked.

Consider the Greek attitude to love. People are apt to complain that there is no love-poetry in Greek, and, if by this is meant that Greek has nothing like the *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* or the love-poetry of Browning, the statement is true. But love-poetry of a sort it has in plenty, and not a Greek play fails to mention Aphrodite and her works; Sappho and Anacreon have a reputation as love-poets; and few of the lyrists are without allusions to the subject, reputable or otherwise. Indeed, it would have been odd, if the greatest interest of humanity had escaped this very human people. Only, Greek love-poetry is not the love-poetry of the Brownings.

There are several aspects under which we may think of love. Physical in its origin, in first resort it is a passion of the body. At the same time it is the most powerful of spiritual and intellectual tonics ; like wine it percolates through the body to the springs of thought and emotion, and becomes a stimulus to wit, imagination, feeling, courage, endurance, sympathy, self-sacrifice and all the activities of man. Again, looked at in a different light, it is the strongest of social bonds, the basis of the family. Again, it is the most intimate of human associations, a union for ' mutual society, help and comfort '. These aspects of love are not necessarily divorced from each other, but if for the purposes of argument we separate them, they may be described thus : the love of the animal, of the lover, of the father, of the husband. These are the most obvious ways in which we may think of love, and these are the ways in which the Greeks as a nation thought of it.

But there is another way of viewing love, a favourite with modern poetry. Hitherto we have spoken of it as an emotion, which, if more than animal, is still natural, if idealized, is still earthly. But there is a conception of love in which it becomes unearthly, supernatural, the exclusive food of the soul, the ambrosia which only immortals taste ; it is no longer grown in the soil, or ground in the mills of earth. Once it was a bond in which man was on a level with any animal ; now its physical origins are so far forgotten that it becomes a symbol of the union of Christ with His Church. Once it was vain and frustrated without the satisfaction of desire ; now the rejected lover feels that he reaps the fruit of his passion as fully as his successful rival. Such is the attitude of many modern poets. They ignore the concrete and natural

aspects of love; their minds are filled with its spiritual satisfactions. Browning looks to his dead wife for 'all hope, all sustainment, all reward'.[1] He conceives a lover as mystically united to a dead girl, who hardly knew his name and was too young to have thought of love.[2] It is enough for him to ride with a woman who does not return his passion;[3] with a serene contentment he calls his successful rivals blest.[4]

Now whereas modern poetry is largely absorbed in this last stage, Greek literature, except for one great writer, shows no trace of it. The Greeks took a direct view of love, and saw in it either a natural passion, or a social tie, or a union for mutual comfort. If any one wishes to satisfy himself of this, let him turn to a branch of poetry from which love is inseparable, to the Greek drama. Let him recall what passages he can bearing on the point, and let him supplement these by looking up any references to Ἔρως and Ἀφροδίτη in the *Indices in Tragicos Graecos*. He may ignore Aeschylus, whom Aristophanes makes say that he never represented a woman in love;[5] Sophocles and Euripides furnish enough material. He will find that these writers do not view love as Browning viewed it. They are never anything but direct.

So it is always in Greek literature. Here are some typical passages taken partly from the drama, partly from elsewhere. The first is a famous love-poem of Sappho, which I quote in bald prose, because even the best verse translations conceal its simplicity.

> 'He seems to me the peer of gods, who sits facing you, and hears close to him your sweet voice, your lovely laughter: it has made the heart shiver in my breast; one

[1] *Ring and the Book*, bk. I. fin. [2] *Evelyn Hope.*
[3] *Last Ride Together.* [4] *One Way of Love.* [5] *Frogs*, 1044.

glance at you, and my voice fails, my tongue is broken,
subtle fire runs straightway through my frame, my eyes
see nothing, there is a roaring in my ears, sweat pours
down me, a tremor seizes every limb ; I am paler than
grass in autumn and seem all but dead.'[1]

Translated into other language this means : 'the presence of my lover throws my senses off their balance.' The emotions described are those of white-hot physical passion felt with amazing intensity ; and no one could call it anything but earthly.

Now take a passage which to outward view is more in the modern vein.

Love is not love alone,
But in her name lie many names concealed ;
For she is Death, imperishable Force,
Desire unmixed, wild Frenzy, Lamentation ;
In her are summed all impulses that drive
To Violence, Energy, Tranquillity.
Deep in each living breast the Goddess sinks,
And all become her prey ; the tribes that swim,
The fourfoot tribes that pace upon the earth,

[1] fr. 2.

Φαίνεταί μοι κῆνος ἴσος θέοισιν
ἔμμεν ὤνηρ, ὅστις ἐναντίος τοι
ἰζάνει καὶ πλασίον ἆδυ φωνεύ-
σας ὑπακούει
καὶ γελαίσας ἰμερόεν, τό μοι μὰν
καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόασεν·
ὡς γὰρ εἰσίδω βροχέως σε, φώνας
οὐδὲν ἔτ' εἴκει·
ἀλλὰ κὰμ μὲν γλῶσσα ϝέαγε, λέπτον δ'
αὔτικα χρῷ πῦρ ὑπαδεδρόμακεν,
ὀππάτεσσι δ' οὐδὲν ὄρημ', ἐπιρρόμ-
βεισι δ' ἄκουαι.
ἀ δὲ ϝίδρως κακχέεται, τρόμος δὲ
παῖσαν ἄγρει, χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας
ἔμμι, τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγω 'πιδεύης
φαίνομαι ἄλλα.

Harbour her; and in birds her wing is sovereign,
In beasts, in mortal men, in gods above.
What god but wrestles with her and is thrown?

. . . .

All thoughts of man and deity are shattered
By Love, without a spear, without a sword.[1]

It may seem at first that this is nearer the modern conception of love. But read the passage carefully and you will see that what is in Sophocles' mind is still love in the first stage. Only whereas Sappho is in a white-hot passion, Sophocles is calmly reflective on it. But it is for him merely a natural thing, a desperate desire which makes men mad or contented or miserable or energetic or lazy, which kills or makes alive, which is always upsetting human calculations and plans. It is still love in its earthly stage.

These two instances illustrate the Greek attitude to love in general; the next is a passage on married love. Andromache is speaking of the life she is destined to lead as the concubine of Neoptolemus and protesting her loyalty to the dead Hector:

How? Shall I thrust aside
Hector's beloved face, and open wide
My heart to this new lord? Oh, I should stand
A traitor to the dead! . . .
One night,
One night . . . aye men have said it . . . maketh tame
A woman in a man's arms . . . O shame, shame!
What woman's lips can so forswear her dead?
O my Hector! best beloved,
That being mine, wast all in all to me,
My prince, my wise one, O my majesty
Of valiance! No man's touch had ever come
Near me, when thou from out my father's home
Didst lead me and make me thine.[2]

[1] Soph. fr. 678. [2] Eur. *Troades* 661 f. (tr. Murray).

The words are a little colourless, for while modern love-poets proclaim their passion in ambitious language, the Greeks were content to feel the thing and leave the embroidery alone; yet, unless we wish for a touch of mysticism, it is difficult to see that anything essential remains to be added to this conception of marriage. But it is absolutcly direct. Indeed, the translation makes it less so than the Greek warrants. For the lines in italics, literally translated, run: 'I had in you a husband sufficient for me in wisdom and birth, and great in riches and courage.' Andromache regards marriage, not as a mystical, supersensual thing, not as a sacrament, but as the purely natural affection of a woman for her first husband, the husband of her girlhood (*ἀκήρατον λαβὼν πρῶτος τὸ παρθένειον ἐζεύξω λέχος*), whom she had found 'sufficient' for her, and prized for such sober and solid qualities as 'birth, wisdom, courage, and wealth'. This is marriage as a union for 'mutual society, help, and comfort'.

Further than that the Greek in general never went. He would never have written *The last Ride Together, Evelyn Hope, One Way of Love,* the Epilogue to *Fifine at the Fair,* and the lines beginning *O Lyric Love,* with which the first book of *The Ring and the Book* closes. Read these last two poems; they deal with the same situation as the lines of Euripides above, for they are spoken by a husband to a dead wife. But whereas Browning thinks of his wife and addresses her as if she were alive, feels their intimacy to be unbroken, and looks to her for inspiration and comfort, Andromache has no doubt that her severance from Hector is complete, and that of their bond nothing but the privilege of fidelity remains. The one union depends on, the other is independent of, space

and time. Browning is mystical; Euripides, though no one could call his sentiments unideal, keeps his feet firm on the earth. He sees no more in marriage than the obvious facts of it warrant. He sees it as Alcman saw the seagull, with directness.

So the Greek saw everything. Here are three further instances, passages on the loss of children, on friendship, and on death. Subjects averse to directness of treatment; subjects lending themselves to much false pathos and false sentiment; subjects through which any writer treads warily. But the Greek is quite frank on them, he calls a spade a spade, and even if his words in two of these cases may seem naïve, in the third few will deny that they are heart-searching, whether we agree with them or not.

The first instance is from the *Supplices* of Euripides. The mothers of the Argive chiefs who have fallen under the walls of Thebes are lamenting for their dead sons. This is what they say: 'Ah child, I nursed you to unhappiness; I bore you in my womb and suffered the agony of travail. But to-day the grave holds that burden, and I have none to feed my old age, though I bore, alas, a son.'[1] *Γηροβοσκὸν οὐκ ἔχω*, 'I have none to feed my old age.' It will be found that most English translations practically expurgate this phrase. They instinctively tone it down. And indeed it is safe to say that any writer, except a Greek, would have omitted these words. He would have dwelt on the misery of bereavement, on the blight that fell on youth and promise; but he would not have allowed his characters to put the prospect of a destitute old age so prominently forward in their grounds for grief. He would have been more conventional and

[1] *Suppl.* 923 f.

more safe. Even in the ruder English poetry, where one might expect to find such things, I cannot remember any place where this particular disadvantage of losing a husband or a son is mentioned; the balladist contents himself with saying simply

> Next morning many widows came
> Their husbands to bewail.

But at least four of Euripides' plays have references of this kind to the γηροβοσκός,[1] and the theme is a regular one in Greek tragedy. The Greek plunges directly for what certainly is a serious inconvenience to a human family—the loss of the bread-winner. He shocks our sentimentality, for he has none of his own. He looks straight at life.

Here is a second instance of Greek directness, taken from a philosopher. Aristotle is talking about friendship. The subject must have suggested many admirable commonplaces, and even had Aristotle refrained from them, he might have felt that on such a subject his motto should be εὐφήμει. But these are his words: 'a friend is a good thing; for not only are friends intrinsically desirable, but they are productive in a number of ways.'[2] Yet Aristotle was no cynic, as his account of friendship in the *Ethics* shows. Nor is he merely joking. For we find that Socrates, too, speaks of friends as trees worth

[1] *Med.* 1033; *Alc.* 663; *Phoen.* 1436; and this passage: perhaps *Ion*, 475. Xenophon, *Oec.* 7. 19, says that men and women marry, firstly that the race may not fail; 'secondly by this pairing human beings provide themselves with γηροβοσκοί.' Generally, throughout Greek drama, whether on this topic or on any other, it would be difficult to find a single instance of false sentiment. A glance at the tragedies of Seneca will show, by contrast, what that means.

[2] *Rhet.* 1362 b 19.

cultivating for their fruit, and deplores the neglect of such profitable investments. 'What other possession is in the least comparable to a good friend?' (So far there is nothing uncommon; but the following remarks sound strange to modern ears.) 'What horse or team of animals is so useful as a good friend, what slave is so well-disposed and constant, what other possession is so entirely excellent? . . . And yet while some people will tend trees for their fruit, most of us are lazy and careless in their attentions to that all-productive property which we call a friend.'[1]

What cynicism! we think. But it is not cynicism, only a perfect frankness, which does not shrink from drawing consequences and is not ashamed of uttering them. It is always meeting us: in an openness of speech about, and allusion to, sexual matters (witness quite casual phrases and metaphors in the tragedians), which at least had this result, that it kept Greek literature singularly free from pruriency: in candid admissions about courage and cowardice, a topic where moderns are particularly reticent. 'I do not undertake to fight with ten or with two, nor indeed willingly with one,' says Demaratus to Xerxes. A young Athenian soldier, explaining to a jury his feelings after the defeat at Coronea, says: 'the archons voted to select detachments as supports, and we were all afraid—naturally, gentlemen; it was a terrible thing, after barely getting off safe a little before, to be thrown into new dangers.' Aristotle avows that only 'insane or insensible' men do not fear earthquakes and storms at sea; and adds: 'it seems that the citizens are induced to face dangers by the penalties and censures which the laws inflict and by the honours which they

[1] Xen. *Mem.* 2. 4. 5 f.

confer.'[1] If a modern man thought these things, would he have the directness to say them?

One more instance; a better one than the preceding, for it brings us near the deeper things of life. It is taken from the Funeral Speech, which was delivered in the first year of the Peloponnesian War. There was a public funeral in the Cerameicus for those who had fallen during the year, and all Athens was there to hear Pericles give the address over their graves. He had no easy task to perform. Obituary consolations are notoriously difficult, and Pericles had not even the belief that these dead had passed into an eternal life. Below him in the crowd he could see those whose husbands, fathers, sons had fallen. What was he to say when he came to speak of their loss? It was difficult to avoid 'vacant chaff well-meant for grain'. This is what he says:

'You know that your life has been passed among manifold vicissitudes; and that they may be thought fortunate who have gained most honour, whether an honourable death like your sons, or an honourable sorrow like yours. I know how hard it is to make you feel this, when the good fortune of others will too often remind you of the gladness which once lightened your hearts. The deepest sorrow is felt at the loss of blessings to which we have grown accustomed. Some of you are of an age at which they may hope to have other children, and they ought to bear their sorrow better. Not only will the children who may be born hereafter make them forget their own lost ones, but the city will be a gainer. To those of you who have passed their prime, I say: "Congratulate yourselves that you have been happy during the greater part of your days; remember that your life of sorrow will not last long, and be comforted by the glory of those who are gone. Honour is the delight of men when they are old and useless."'[2]

[1] Hdt. 7. 104. Lysias, *Or.* 16. 16. Aristotle, 1115b, 27; 1116a, 18. So Aeschines, *In Ctes.* 175.

[2] Thuc. 2. 44.

That is cold comfort, for childlessness in the eyes of a Greek was a far greater misfortune than it is to us.[1] Yet Pericles does not spare his audience, or minimize their loss. He dwells on it, returns to it, enforces it on their minds. He even reminds them how often in days to come it will return to them. Others have thought it better to have loved and lost than never to have loved. Pericles disagrees and he will not spare his hearers the point. And what is the consolation he offers? That some shall make themselves useful to Athens by having more children; while the others must console themselves in a 'useless old age' with their neighbours' respect. There is no mincing of words here; no shrinking from facts. We may not think that Pericles is right; but at any rate, he has looked death straight in the face. We can see that, if we set against the words of Pericles a fine piece of sentiment on the same subject. It is an extract from Dryden's *Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew.*

> Thou youngest Virgin-Daughter of the Skies,
>   Made in the last promotion of the *Blest*;
> Whose Palms, new pluckt from Paradise,
> In spreading *Branches* more sublimely rise,
>   Rich with Immortal Green above the rest:
> Whether, adopted to some Neighbouring Star,
> Thou roll'st above us in thy wand'ring Race,
>   Or, in Procession fixt and regular,
> Mov'd with the Heavens Majestick pace:
>   Or, called to more Superior *Bliss*,
> Thou tread'st, with Seraphims, the vast *Abyss*:
> Whatever happy region is thy place,
> Cease thy Celestial Song a little space;
> (Thou wilt have time enough for Hymns Divine,
>   Since Heav'ns Eternal Year is thine.)

[1] Euripides puts children before 'wealth and royal halls': *Ion*, 482—see the whole passage and Greek literature *passim*.

> Hear then a Mortal Muse thy praise rehearse
> In no ignoble Verse,
> But such as thy own voice did practise here
> When thy first Fruits of poesie were given,
> To make thyself a welcome Inmate there;
> While yet a young Probationer,
> And Candidate of Heav'n.

Certainly this is 'no ignoble verse'. But read again the passage from the Funeral Speech quoted above. It has indeed none of Dryden's conscious art; as its language, so its sentiments are bald and almost brutal; many people might think that if these were all the fruits of patriotism, and these all the rewards of the pains of child-bearing and child-rearing, then S. Paul was right to say that the Greeks were without hope in the world. But right or wrong, Thucydides has at any rate felt far more deeply than Dryden, what death is. He has not obscured its form with a mist of convention and sentiment. He has brought us really into its presence, and his words, if they are put by the side of Dryden's, simply kill them. Dryden's lines are beautiful, not without feeling, and, in their stately and imaginative phrasing, the work of a real poet. We might read them delightfully in an armchair by the fireside; but would they not seem a mockery in a house of death?

It is more usual to define first and illustrate afterwards; we have inverted the process and given instances of a quality before we analysed it. We saw that the Greeks did not view love as Dante, or death as Dryden, or seagulls as Mrs. Browning; that they admitted the material uses of friends and children with naïve candour: and we gave the name directness to the habit of mind in virtue

of which they did this. We must now return and define more exactly what directness is.

Two things it is not. It is not, as we might at first be inclined to think, an absence of convention. If any one maintains that the Greeks did not descend to such a thing, it is easy to convict him by pointing to the Greek drama, which with its chorus, its three actors, its queer stage machinery, its long harangues, its fabulous mythology, has far more conventions than our own. But that is no discredit to it. All literatures work through authorized and accepted forms. Rhythm, metre, language itself, are conventions. But convention is not conventionality, and its employment is consistent with absolute inner truthfulness of feeling. We may wear a collar, a dress coat, or even a fancy costume, without thereby becoming insincere. These are the lines on which we might answer any one who argued that Euripides and others, using the old myths without always believing in them, could not be called direct.

Nor yet does directness mean that the Greeks had an unerring view into the real nature of things, and that, like skilful surgeons, they could cut within a millimetre of their mark. This is too much to claim for them. Such accuracy of insight has not been given to man, and whether we turn to their philosophers' speculations on the universe, or to their poets' dreams about the Gods, we shall find that in common with all humanity, they made their blunders and had their blind eye. That is no discredit to them either, for every age has beliefs which its successor will disown. Milton depicts Satan striding across the sea of burning marle, and Shakespeare shows Prospero conversing with a winged spirit. Yet Satan is none the less a living portrait of rebellious pride,

nor Prospero less a pattern of the charitable wisdom of old age, because their creators placed them in a setting which we find incredible. Similarly Aeschylus and Euripides kept their hold on real life in spite of legend and myth.

We shall understand more easily the quality of which we are speaking, when we remember that the Greeks were a primitive people. They were simpler, less sophisticated, more naïve than we, for they stood nearer to the morning of the world, and had inherited fewer traditions of thought, smaller accumulations of knowledge. There is something childlike about them. Like children they were sometimes deceitful and often mistaken, but romanticism and sentimentality had not yet taken hold upon them. Like children they had an amazing power of going straight to the point. The freshness with which they looked at the most common things and lighted instinctively on truths 'which we are groping all our lives to find', is childlike; and very childlike is the directness which saw in things no more than is actually there. Only they were children with the intellects of men.

This primitiveness, this simplicity of the Greeks is in the first instance responsible for the qualities on which their admirers so often dwell, their lucidity, their concreteness, their definiteness, their 'eternal outline', their directness. They were too young for many of the tastes of our own age. They themselves said that they disliked τὸ ἄπειρον, the infinite, 'that of which the end cannot be seen:' the mysterious as a whole was disagreeable to them, and they were infinitely far from the deliberate exploitation of it, by which Maeterlinck, Verlaine, and the modern symbolists live.[1] They had

[1] A. Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, gives a convenient account of modern symbolism.

no part in those familiar phenomena of modern poetry, its rebellion against the actual, its cry for the impossible, its reaching away from the finite, its obstinate questioning of sense and outward things, its aspiration towards unrealized worlds. They did not seek, like Mrs. Browning, for a half-human soul in seabirds: nor, like Shelley, did they flutter in the illimitable inane, expressing the material in terms of the immaterial:[1] nor, when they wished to describe the fading of a rose, did they write, like Blake:

> O Rose, thou art sick!
> The invisible worm
> That flies in the night,
> In the howling storm,
>
> Has found out thy bed
> Of crimson joy;
> And his dark secret love
> Does thy life destroy.

Nor did they wanton in mere beauty, using language and painting situations, because, though unreal, they are picturesque or pleasant; like Vergil, who introduces rustics talking politics in limelight scenery, or like Ovid, who spends his genius on characters as unreal, if as beautiful, as the courtiers and shepherdesses of Dresden china; like Dryden, who thinks to annihilate death by describing its victim as moving across heaven in the procession of the stars; like Heine, who talks of a pine on a snowclad northern hill, dreaming of a palm in the burning East; like Mr. Housman, who tells us that if we go to a certain bridge in Shropshire, we shall hear his soul 'sighing above the glimmering weirs'. Nor did they wallow in luxurious emotions of sentimentality, trying at all costs to be magnificent or heroic or pathetic or

[1] F. Thompson's essay on Shelley, p. 58.

picturesque, sacrificing truth to effect, leaving reality to follow a phantom, which in the end disappoints them of their quest: thus they escaped the commonest vice of our literature, which flaws forty-nine out of fifty among its novels, and from which few even of our greatest writers are free. They have nothing which answers to the unreal pathos of Dickens, the intolerable falsity of Pope, the pose of Byron, the affectations of Bulwer Lytton.

Instead they did what Mrs. Browning did not do with the seagull, nor Dryden with death, nor Vergil with the Italian rustic, nor Blake with the rose, nor Byron with himself—they kept their eye on their subject, and wrote down what the eye saw there. They were finite and actual: they lived in a realized world. They looked at things naked, and found that the seagull was an ordinary bird and love a very definite emotion. They did not search in them for more than meets the eye, but were content with their beauty as it is. There is quite enough beauty, they thought, in the real thing, if you will only open your eyes and see it. They knew too that parents were badly off when their children died, that friends were profitable, that children dead in battle could never be replaced when their parents were past a certain age. They said so frankly at once. They were not sentimental about these things.

Here let us guard against a misconception into which we might slip. Some modern writers are very unsentimental; they plume themselves on looking straight at life: they open one eye and see all the ugliness, meanness, and odiousness of things, and produce literature brutal and bitter to a degree at which subsequent generations will wonder. Do not let us suppose that Greek directness led to any such results. It did not mean pessimism.

The Greeks had both eyes open, and did not overlook good and beauty because they were able to see evil. They knew that life, like light, can be decomposed into many colours, and is really neither dark nor bright, but many-hued. So they never fell into sordid 'realism'. In their saddest moments—and a tone of sadness runs through all Greek literature—they remembered that they had received good at the hand of God as well as evil. 'Rejoice,' writes Archilochus, 'in what is delightful, and be not overvexed at ill: and recognize what a balance our life maintains.'[1] 'I weep not for thee,' is the epitaph of one friend over another, 'for thou knewest many fair things; and again God dealt thee thy lot of ill.'[2] Light balanced against darkness; darkness balanced against light. That is the Greek attitude, and it is the truest realism.

Directness of the kind of which we have been speaking is a quality which the Greek shares with writers of every race. Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* is as direct as Homer, so are the Icelandic Sagas: so is all early literature: for the poets who write it are young-eyed people in a young world. And because affectation and sentimentality are not the necessary accompaniments, though they are the dangers, of culture, directness persists in every age, and for the most part prevails over its opposites. But always, as time advances, this primitive simplicity tends to give place to complication, affectation, unreality. The *Euphues* of Lyly, the *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney mark such a progression in our own literature. Was there nothing analogous in Greece? Did not the world become stale to its writers, so that they took their eyes off it and followed fancy or beauty into regions of unreality? In

[1] fr. 66. [2] Stobaeus, *Flor.* 124, p. 616 (tr. Mackail).

the age of Euripides, for instance, when at least two centuries of poetry had been outlived, and the first bloom had passed from the world, shall we not find that Greece forsook directness for other attractions?

Certainly we see signs of such a movement in the fifth century. The extravagances of Aeschylus—it is easy to exaggerate their number—may be due to a unique Titanic nature. But the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* of Plato, at which we shall glance later, show a new spirit, and the choruses of the *Bacchae* are full of romanticism. Lines like

> πᾶν δὲ συνεβάκχευ' ὄρος
> καὶ θῆρες.

attribute, in the modern manner, animate emotions to inanimate things.[1] The writer of the *Treatise on the Sublime* in his third chapter quotes instances of that subordination of truth to effect, of reality to pose, which is the greatest enemy to directness: and Plato has parodied it in Agathon's speech in the *Symposium*. If we go to later writers we shall find the same spirit in Alexandrian literature; and it is the abiding vice of that New Sophistry which was the great work of the second century A. D. Still, before Alexandrian times, these are rare exceptions. Of the instances of directness given above, the most part came from comparatively late writers, from Thucydides, Aristotle, Xenophon, Sophocles, Euripides himself. And if we go to still later times, it is the same; Theocritus,

[1] *Bacchae*, 726–7: 'The wild beasts and all the mountain revelled with them' (συνεβάκχευε has been taken to mean 'rang with the name of Bacchus': but that is not its natural meaning, and the author of the περὶ ὕψους took it as above, c. 15); cp. Aesch. fr. 58 ἐνθουσιᾷ δὴ δῶμα, βακχεύει στέγη. Both these instances, it is to be noticed, occur in connexion with Bacchic worship.

Polybius, the epigrammatists, Lucian, are as 'direct' and truthful as Homer or Alcman. This is enough to show that directness was not merely the transitory bloom of the youth of Hellenism.

Its persistence was in part due to a fortunate accident. At the moment when romanticism and sentimentality might have seized them, the Greeks were passing through a severe discipline of scientific and philosophic thought. Dialectics, logic, ethics, natural science, were created or developed during the fifth century, and in an air which is full of these forces, the fanciful and the insincere find it hard to breathe. Logic would hammer them to hear if they rang true, dialectic would toss them up and down to see if they hung together, science would insist on knowing if they corresponded to facts. Thus if Euripides or his successors tried a flight into mere fantasy, there was always something to restrain them. They had learnt to think and criticize, to trust their brains, to recognize that mere imagination could not guarantee what reason would disown, to keep the feet on earth even when the head was in the clouds; and this is almost as effective a safeguard of directness, as natural simplicity of mind.[1] Even when they came to deal with philosophy, in which directness is difficult, and the unknown and the indefinite have to be faced, the Greeks still turned towards the concrete, and as far as possible checked their conceptions by references to earth: compare the moral philosophy of Aristotle with that of T. H. Green, and the difference is apparent. A self-perpetuating tradition had been founded which, even in ages of decadence, and even for writers of metaphysics, kept its clarifying power.

[1] How much the world might have missed, had the modern symbolists received a rigorous training in logic or science!

Pages have been spent in defining directness, and the reader may complain that though many phrases and metaphors have been discharged at him, and though he has been told what it is not, he still lacks a positive definition. If he does so, we will answer him by piling our metaphors and phrases in a heap, and saying that to be direct is to keep the feet on the earth, to shrink from mysticism, to be concrete and definite; to dwell on the 'unimaginary' qualities of things, to see things naked, to keep the eye on them; to avoid sentimentalism and all forms of literary falsity: in fine, to have the outlook on life of a simple, naïve, childlike mind.

This is the second ingredient in that Hellenic truthfulness of which Goethe spoke; by it the Greeks were enabled

> To bear all naked truths,
> And to envisage circumstance, all calm:[1]

and because of it, we seem in their literature to watch the immediate image of life, unrefracted by any disturbing medium, just as to-day, off their coasts, the traveller sometimes sails over a sunken sarcophagus, and far below him can see the carven figures on it, clear and undistorted through the pellucid waters.

Some people think that the world can have too much of directness, and quarrel with precisely the quality which we have been praising. It is just here, they argue, that we have advanced beyond the Greeks. By a less exact fidelity to hard fact we have immensely enriched life and poetry, as by their strictness the Greeks impoverished both. Fancy playing with the picturesque and pretending that it is true: Reverie in its dreamworld:

[1] Keats, *Hyperion*, bk. 2.

Poetic Pantheism, with its sympathetic interpretation of nature: none of these were known to the old Greek world. They would have withered away in the blaze of its directness.

True, it is a clear light in which the Greeks lived; but there is a quality of coldness and hardness in its tone. We miss the richness, the variety of light and shadow, which our own literature possesses. Greece never learnt, like the symbolists, to indicate the vague emotions which hover on the verge of consciousness: it ignores the infinite mystery of things or reduces it to a minimum. Its clarity palls on us like the transparent atmosphere and vivid colours of Switzerland, till we long for mistier outlines and bluer distances. And more. It is hostile, a critic might argue, to sentiment as well as to sentimentality. A whole range of thought and feeling is wanting in Hellenism. There is hardly a trace in it of that poetry of failure, in which writing of weakness and disaster, a poet so treats his subject that we almost feel the weakness to be a virtue and the disaster a success. Such sentiment is present, perhaps, in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, and Marlowe's *Edward II*: it is the life and soul of the poetry and prose of Jacobitism; Browning dallies with it;[1] and it inspires much modern minor poetry, notably that of the Irish school and of Francis Thompson. There is none of this sentiment in the Greeks. They do not admire and exalt failure, they do not disguise it: they look at it far too directly to do either the one or the other. With an infinite sense of the tragedy, their literature goes forward in its splendid way, passing inexorably by the dying, leaving the wounded to lie where they fall, offering no consolation to the mourner. Hector dies, and Homer

[1] e.g. in *Abt Vogler*; and in his praise of the man who 'aiming at a million misses a unit.'

simply says that 'his soul flew forth from his limbs and was gone to the house of Hades, wailing her fate, leaving her vigour and youth';[1] and passes on to describe his mutilation by Achilles and the hopeless tears of his wife. Troy is burnt, its men killed, Astyanax thrown from the walls before his mother's eyes. Yet, as the play ends and they pass into slavery, the Trojan women only say, 'Alas! unhappy city: still, turn thou thy feet to the galleys of Greece.'[2]

Against these pronouncements, merciless and inevitable as those of fate, our sentiment rebels.

> εἰ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμον περὶ τόνδε φυγόντε
> αἰεὶ δὴ μέλλοιμεν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε
> ἔσσεσθαι.[3]

If we were unageing and immortal all our days, if there were no such things as ill health or failure, then we might live in this blaze of white light, which befits the deities of Olympus and an Olympian humanity: but as it is, let us turn to Greece when we are elated and triumphant, but keep for our hours of depression and disappointment the twilight world of sentiment, where irrevocable defeat is in imagination retrieved, and the paths again lie open, which illness, folly, sin, or want of parts have finally closed, where failure takes the form of success, and death itself is transmuted into something rich and strange.

Such, put briefly, is a plea which might be made against Hellenism: it is the plea of colour versus light. The case is easier to put than to decide: and in default of an impartial judge we will use a method consecrated by poetic usage to settle the dispute. We will ascertain what we should gain by the Greek directness, and what we should

[1] *Il.* 22. 361–3. [2] Eur. *Troad.* 1331–2.

[3] *Il.* 12. 322–4. 'If we were destined to escape this war and be for ever ageless and immortal.'

lose by it; and, as Dionysus once put the tragedies of Aeschylus and Euripides in opposing scales, so we will weigh our losses against our gains.

Suppose we adopt directness. First, we shall lose the 'poetry of failure' spoken of above; and must console ourselves by remembering that a great deal of minor poetry will disappear under that head. Then, we shall lose all the poetry which owes its origin to the love of rhetoric. Rhetoric is always tempting men to close their eyes to facts, to 'talk big', to use, irrespective of their truth, phrases that ring well and flatter the ear; to say what sounds effective or picturesque or pathetic or magnanimous; to see things as we should like them to be, as public opinion approves of their being, anyhow but as they are. Such poetry is incompatible with directness and perishes in its presence. And so we should lose a good deal of Latin poetry. For the Romans, with their passion for rhetoric, are continually saying things that sound very well, but are simply untrue. Their literature is full of false sentiment, of unreal points, of rhetorical lies.[1] Here is a passage from Lucan:

> Victurosque dei celant, ut vivere durent,
> Felix esse mori.[2]

Of course, in point of fact, the gods do nothing of the sort; nor under ordinary circumstances is there any happiness

[1] The following passage from De Quincey's essay on *Rhetoric* is interesting in this connexion, though some people might disagree with his views. 'Among the greater orators of Greece there is not a solitary gleam of rhetoric. . . . Isocrates may have a little, being . . . neither orator nor rhetorician in any eminent sense.' This quality in Greek oratory De Quincey attributes 'to the intense reality of its interest'. And if this can be said of Demosthenes and Lysias, how much more can it be said of the poets and thinkers of Greece!

[2] Lucan, 4. 519. 'From those who are to live the gods conceal the happiness of death, that they may continue in life.'

in death. Only the sentiment has a sham Stoical ring, and appeals in its rhetorical unreality to all that is rhetorical and unreal in us or was rhetorical and unreal in Lucan's contemporaries. Ovid is even fuller of unreality than Lucan, though his unreality is of a different kind. The following is a passage from an imaginary letter of Dido to Aeneas:

> Your sword before me while I write does lie,
> And by it, if I write in vain, I die.
> My tears flow down; the sharp edge cuts their flood,
> And drinks my sorrows, that must drink my blood.
> How well thy gift does with my fate agree;
> My funeral pomp is cheaply made by thee.
> To no new wounds my bosom I display,
> The sword but enters where love made the way.

And she concludes by suggesting a suitable epitaph:

> The cause of death and sword by which she died
> Aeneas gave; the rest herself supplied.[1]

Now these sentiments may show wit, cleverness and a certain gift of tinsel pathos, but they are not real; such words would not have been written by a heart-broken woman in antiquity any more than now, and Ovid is untrue to life in making her write them. Hence, though poetry like this may be attractive to us, if we wish to be entertained or stimulated by literature, and require of it merely cleverness or fancy or artistic grace, it will not satisfy any deeper needs. It will not serve as a serious document for the study of humanity and its ways; it will not sustain or inspire or comfort, for it has not that higher sincerity which penetrates to the heart.

All this verse we shall lose; and with it much of Latin

[1] *Heroides*, vii. ll. 184–90, 195–6. The translation, which is mainly Dryden's, exactly gives the feeling of the original.

literature, condemned because it is unreal, and tries to get past our sense of fact by appealing to our sentimentality or to our sense of beauty, and so charming us into admiration of it. The Romans took kindly to the literary pastoral, and the literary epic, and the sham didactic poem; they revelled in the undigested mythology of another race. They are imitative and second-hand, content to dispense with direct experience of life and translate into their own language the emotions and thought of others; for the most part their fingers do not touch the pulse of life. Vergil's *Pastorals* and *Georgics* are charming; but his shepherds are sham ones and keep no sheep, nor are any genuine labourers at work in his fields. Only Lucretius among Latin poets will show us the hard struggle of man with the earth. And if we only keep Vergil in selections, we shall have some difficulty in keeping Ovid at all. When he is animal, he is no doubt sincere; but in general he spends his time in the company of mythological marionettes, in whose reality neither he nor any one else could possibly believe.

Finally, there will be losses nearer home, of all literature which has not the stamp of entire sincerity. We shall lose masses of eighteenth-century poetry with its surrender of truth to pointed epigram or conventional diction; masses of modern poetry with its surrender of truth to luxurious emotion; much from the *Idylls of the King* and from poems like *Enoch Arden*, in which, to quote a famous criticism, there is more *simplesse* than simplicity. Quantities of Shelley will disappear. We shall keep the last chorus of *Hellas*, but some of the most exquisite stanzas of *Adonais* will dissolve. We shall hear no more of the Mighty Mother, the Dreams and Splendours, the Twilight Fantasies. Such phantoms of Romance cannot live in honest sunlight, and we shall prefer as our models,

either the simply truthful words in which Antigone looks forward to joining her dead:

> ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον, ὦ κατασκαφὴς
> οἴκησις αἰείφρουρος, οἷ πορεύομαι
> πρὸς τοὺς ἐμαυτῆς, ὧν ἀριθμὸν ἐν νεκροῖς
> πλεῖστον δέδεκται Φερσέφασσ' ὀλωλότων·
> ἐλθοῦσα μέντοι κάρτ' ἐν ἐλπίσιν τρέφω
> φίλη μὲν ἥξειν πατρί, προσφιλὴς δὲ σοί,
> μῆτερ, φίλη δὲ σοί, κασίγνητον κάρα.[1]

or the preface to *Adonais*, a work of Hellenic sincerity. Set fragments from the preface and the poem side by side, and the point will become clear.

'John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his 24th year, on the —— of —— 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. . . .

'The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats's life were not made known to me till the *Elegy* was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of *Endymion* was exasperated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits; the poor fellow seems to have been hooted from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had wasted the promise of his genius, than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care.'

Is not this at least as noble a tribute to Keats as the cloudy splendour of the stanzas that follow it?

[1] Soph. *Ant.* 891–4, 897–9. Mr. Whitelaw translates:

> O tomb! O nuptial chamber! O house deep-delved
> In earth, safeguarded ever! To thee I come
> And to my kin in thee, who many a one
> Are with Persephone, dead among the dead:
> But a good hope I cherish, that, come there,
> My father's love will greet me, yea and thine,
> My mother—and thy welcome, brother dear.

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died? With veilèd eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of Death.

We shall lose all verse of this pattern, which is, truthfully considered, only a 'monumental mockery'. And we could enumerate many other losses, at the nature of which the reader can guess by referring to pages 90 to 92 above.

The losses in our list have been rising in value as we progressed, and many people who would surrender Ovid or Lucan may hesitate when they are called upon to part with *Adonais*. But if they would really learn the lesson of Hellenism, they may have to make sacrifices even greater than that. The love of the unknown, the voluntary surrender to the emotions which it arouses, are as uncommon in Greek as they are common in modern poetry. The Greeks did not indulge the soaring imagination which loves to lose itself in an *O altitudo*, or muse on the strangeness of a world in which man walks with wonder and humility amid riddles and mysteries, himself the greatest riddle and mystery of all. True, there are exceptions; Plato, whom we must keep for special treatment; Aeschylus somewhat, in whose plays

Giant shapes silently flitting
Pile the dim outlines of the coming doom.

In the close of the *Oedipus Coloneus* there is a trace of similar feeling, and perhaps something allied to it in the *Bacchae*. But, unless it be from Plato and his late descendants, it would be difficult, if not impossible, really to

parallel in Greek literature, either Pascal, *le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie*,[1] or Vaughan:

> On some gilded cloud or flower
> My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
> And in those weaker glories spy
> Some shadows of eternity.

or Wordsworth indulging

> That blessed mood
> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world
> Is lightened :—that serene and blessed mood
> In which the affections gently lead us on,—
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a human soul ;
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things.[2]

Such emotions are surely alien from the main drift of Greek literature. Greek wonder was milder in quality. 'There are many strange things, and nothing is stranger than man,'[3] says Sophocles; yes, but when we read further we find that man is strange because he sails the sea, ploughs the earth, founds cities and rules his kind. Just subjects for wonder, doubtless; but put this beside the profound amazement of Pascal, frightened by 'the

[1] *Pensées*, 206.

[2] It is noticeable that in the next lines Wordsworth half repents of these words and relapses into a more 'direct', a more Greek view of the situation:

> If this
> Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft
> In darkness and amid the many shapes
> Of joyless daylight . . .
> How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee
> O sylvan Wye!
>
> *Lines composed above Tintern Abbey.*

[3] *Ant.* 332.

eternal silence of these infinite spaces', and mark the difference between ancient and modern.[1]

On our judgement of the value of these feelings of wonder will largely depend our judgement of the completeness or incompleteness of Greek literature. Many people will feel that the classical Greeks as a whole felt wonder too little, and were, to adapt Carlyle's epigram, more at home in Zion than any one has a right to be; that the world seemed too simple to them, simpler than it is. Since their day the floor of heaven, which they thought solid, has been shattered, and revealed abysses of infinite spaces behind; and in the world of the spirit an analogous enlargement was made, when Christianity broke up the old limitations of humanity and spread a belief in its infinite possibilities.

But let us turn to the compensations which Greek directness has to offer us. If we achieve it, our first gain will be a far keener sense of the beauty and interest of the ordinary simple things around us. Most of us pass through life, as people go for walks at Oxford, with their eyes on nothing in particular, and their mind on anything but the beauty through which they move. Existence is a prolonged somnambulism with rare moments of waking. Even when our eyes are open, they are fixed sometimes on sordid details, sometimes on abstruse and complicated topics, and miss the ordinary things which lie at our feet. Our poets are no better: they soar away from the common earth and lift us with them into ideal worlds. Shakespeare keeps listening to the 'still sad music of humanity', Milton's vision is 'with dreadful

[1] The same quality of Hellenism is indicated by the primitive character of music—the most suggestive of arts—in Greece, and by the lateness of the appearance of the conception of personality—the most mysterious of conceptions; the first faint traces of it are found, I believe, in Aristotle.

faces thronged and fiery arms', Shelley lives 'pinnacled dim in the intense inane'.

But while Shelley tries at the expense of twenty-one verses to make me think of his skylark as a 'blithe spirit' (which I know it is not), Sappho and Simonides with four words[1] make me see a real nightingale, and give me a greater and a far saner pleasure than Shelley's 'unbodied joy' could give. For the Greeks walked through life with their eyes open, and did not miss *ὁ κατ' ἦμαρ βίοτος*. I open my volume of the lyric poets, and it is this characteristic which meets me on every page. The writer's feet are on the earth, and its sights and sounds are before them. The visions they see are not Shelley's, but a girl who cannot mind her loom for thinking of her lover;[2] or shepherds trampling down the bluebells as they follow their flocks on the hills;[3] or a stormy night and men drinking beside blazing logs;[4] or a common barndoor

[1] Sapph. fr. 39 Ἦρος ἄγγελος, ἰμερόφωνος ἀήδων, 'The messenger of spring, the lovely-voiced nightingale. Simon. fr. 73 ἀήδονες πολυκώτιλοι χλωραύχενες εἰαριναί, 'The warbling nightingales with olive necks, the birds of spring.'

[2] Sapph. fr. 90:

> Γλύκεια μᾶτερ, οὔτοι δύναμαι κρέκην τὸν ἴστον
> πόθῳ δαμεῖσα παῖδος βραδίναν δι' Ἀφρόδιταν.

'Dear mother, I cannot weave my web; I am overcome with longing for the boy, by the doing of delicate Aphrodite.'

[3] Sapph. fr. 94:

> Οἴαν τὰν ὐάκινθον ἐν οὔρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες
> πόσσι καταστείβοισι, χάμαι δέ τε πόρφυρον ἄνθος . . .

'Like the hyacinth on the hills which shepherds tread under foot, and the bright flower is crushed to the ground.'

[4] Alcaeus, fr. 34:

> Ὕει μὲν ὁ Ζεύς, ἐκ δ' ὀράνω μέγας
> χείμων, πεπάγασιν δ' ὐδάτων ῥόαι.
> . . . .
> κάββαλλε τὸν χείμων', ἐπὶ μὲν τίθεις
> πῦρ, ἐν δὲ κίρναις οἶνον ἀφειδέως
> μέλιχρον, αὐτὰρ ἀμφὶ κόρσᾳ
> μάλθακον ἀμφιτίθεις γνόφαλλον.

fowl;[1] or the naïve and very concrete occupations of a poet;[2] or an admirable description of an evening's genial merrymaking over the fire:

These are the words to use, in the stormy season of winter,
Lying on couches soft, with bellies full, by the fireside,
Honeysweet wine in the glass, and nuts and beans at the
elbow;
'Who are you? when were you born? and which is the
country you hail from?
What was your age when the Persian came'?[3]

Always it is a joy in simple things that marks the Greek; he had learnt that this was the secret for one who wished in Euripides' words, *κατὰ φάος νύκτας τε φίλας εὐαίωνα διαζῆν*. This is the first thing he can teach us.

Then in our general view of life 'directness' will keep us from humbug and *false* sentiment. That will be a cruel blow at first. We delight in 'dim and feverish sensations, dreamy and sentimental sadness, tendency to reverie, and general patheticalness',[4] without troubling to ask

'Zeus sends rain, there is a great storm out of the sky, and the waterfloods are frozen. Out with winter! Pile high the fire, mix honeyed wine generously and wrap a soft hood round your head.'

[1] Simonides, fr. 81 ἁμερόφων' ἀλέκτωρ, 'O cock that criest at dawn.'

[2] Anacreon, fr. 17:

Ἠρίστησα μὲν ἰτρίου
λεπτοῦ μικρὸν ἀποκλάς,
οἴνου δ' ἐξέπιον κάδον,
νῦν δ' ἁβρῶς ἐρόεσσαν
ψάλλω πηκτίδα τῇ φίλῃ
κωμάζων παιδὶ ἁβρῇ.

'I broke a little off a thin cake and breakfasted I drank up a jug of wine: and now I am playing my dainty passionate lyre to the dainty girl of my love.'

[3] Xenophanes, ap. Athenaeum, 54:

Πὰρ πυρὶ χρὴ τοιαῦτα λέγειν χειμῶνος ἐν ὥρῃ
ἐν κλίνῃ μαλακῇ κατακείμενον, ἔμπλεον ὄντα,
πίνοντα γλυκὺν οἶνον, ὑποτρώγοντ' ἐρεβίνθους.
"τίς πόθεν εἶς ἀνδρῶν, πόσα τοι ἔτη ἐστὶ φέριστε,
πηλίκος ἦσθ' ὅθ' ὁ Μῆδος ἀφίκετο;"

[4] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, iv. 13. § 14.

whether these are justified by fact. We are opium-eaters, and allow ourselves to be deluded by splendid visions or drugged into a comfortable slumber. If a poet is musical or picturesque, if he catches our fancy or tickles our ears, we never ask whether what he says is true.

There are two literatures in the world which are hopelessly at war with this spirit, and which we must shun unless we wish to be shaken out of it. They are very different in their conclusions, for they start from widely different presuppositions, but they are very much alike in their determination to see things as they are. One of these is Greek literature, the other is the New Testament. They may seem a queer pair to couple. Yet any one can take my meaning who will note S. Paul's teaching on marriage or that preamble to the Anglican marriage service for which to-day we substitute some amiable hymn. Read these and consider with what a Greek directness the Apostle and the Church face the subject. Both to the early Christians and to the Greeks life was too real a thing to be surrendered to sentiment and sham. The gay fancies of Sidney's pastorals, the facile epithalamia of the seventeenth century, the glib threnodies of Dryden and Pope, the sentimental melancholy of our minor poets were not for them. They were content, in the presence of life, if they could use and enjoy it rightly, and in the presence of death, if they could know it for what it was.

NOTE

Let us notice briefly one apparent, and one real, exception to directness in Greek literature. Was Empedocles direct when he attributed the cosmic process to the working of Love and Strife; or the Pythagoreans when they declared that things were numbers? Is

Plato direct in the view of love which he advances in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* ?

It must be remembered with regard to Empedocles, and indeed to all the early natural philosophers, that when a thinker tries to reduce the world to its elements, to find what lies below its surface, he is *ipso facto* unable to deal in the tangible and concrete, in the 'actual and unimaginary' qualities of things. Further, as Professor Burnet has pointed out in his *Early Greek Philosophy*, science is obliged to advance through a succession of hypotheses which sound incredible and are rarely true.[1] And above all, though there is *error* in their views, there is none of the *falsity* which we saw to be the real enemy of directness. Perhaps that is because the eccentricities of the Greek physicists were intellectual, those of the modern symbolists are emotional. With regard to Plato, the exception must be admitted—it is touched on in Chapter VII; certainly he is highly mystical and modern in his treatment of love. Yet it would seem that here we have him in an un-Greek mood, or at least in a mood inconsistent with the genius of the Greeks. In the first place, there is no trace of such a view of love before Plato; there is no trace of it (I believe) even in Greek tragedy; in the second, though Xenophon in his *Symposium* attributes the mystical view to Socrates, there is no trace of it in Xenophon's picture of ordinary married life in the *Oeconomicus*: and it is worth noticing that the other guests at Xenophon's dinner were very far from sharing it.[2] If we find one view of love in nine-tenths of Greek literature, and another view in one-tenth of it (and this is a liberal over-estimate of the mysticism in Greek), we may legitimately conclude that the first is the general Greek view.

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 29, 32.

[2] Xen. *Sympos.* 9.

CHAPTER IV

THE NOTE OF HUMANISM

Now rises a further question. The Greek tried to see things as they are. Yes, but how are they? He was true to facts. Yes, but what are facts? There are very few certain facts; and these are such that the knowledge of them does not much help us to solve the problem of conduct; for the important thing is not the fact, but the meaning we attach to it. Birth—as Wordsworth viewed it, or as a physiologist views it in his physiological moments, or as Mr. H. G. Wells views it, or as the mother of a child views it; death—a mere dissolution of cells and tissues, or an end to the possibility of many sensations of pleasure and pain, or the opening of a door into a new world and a vast increase in those possibilities; marriage—a momentary connexion between two animals, or a mystical partnership never to be dissolved; there are the same facts in every case, but they can be taken to mean very different things. The important thing is not the fact, but its interpretation. So there rises the question: how did the Greeks interpret the world? They had the same facts as we have (the modern world in spite of its scientific discoveries has no more *certain* clue to the meaning of life than Aeschylus or Thucydides). In what light did they interpret these facts?

They did not interpret the world in the materialistic way, seeing in a beautiful landscape only an exceptional disposition of strata, and in a human being only a peculiar

collection of atoms. Nor did they interpret it in a spiritual way, believing that the realities were unseen things—God, a Spiritual Universe, a Future Life—and saying that it did not yet appear what we should be. There were no infinite possibilities in the sky above them or in the human beings around them. While to some the world has meant Atoms, and to others Spirit, to the Greek it meant simply Man; man under his natural circumstances, and with his most obvious attributes; passing from childhood through manhood to old age, the centre of his existence a home and a city, its main events birth, marriage, death; its chief evils sickness, poverty, exile; its chief goods health, wealth, success, an honourable name, warm affections and friendships. The Greek took this being, with his instincts, impulses, and faculties, and, with no preconceptions, no regard to the invisible, asked himself to what they pointed; asked himself what obviously and on the surface man was, and in accordance with the answer constructed his philosophy of life. Here, then, we have the fourth note of the Greek genius. It is the human standpoint towards life; we may call it Humanism, and we may sum it up in the saying attributed to Protagoras, *ἄνθρωπος μέτρον πάντων*—Man is the measure of all things.

It is true that in a sense the Greek was religious; we can see from the writings of Herodotus and Xenophon how continually the gods were in his thoughts, and even S. Paul called him *δεισιδαιμονέστερος*. But his religion was very human. It is true that he admitted possibilities in the unseen; but he minimized the inconveniences that might attend their existence by making the unseen visible; he admitted the existence of gods, but he created them in his own human likeness, with his own human passions,

and only differing from man by their immortality and their greater power. As Pindar bluntly puts it, 'one race there is of men and one of gods, but from one mother, Earth, draw we both our breath; yet is the strength of us diverse altogether, for the race of men is nought, but the brazen heaven abideth.'[1] This is what the Greek made of God. He humanized him.

Everywhere he carried this passion for humanizing things. He set to work on the old beast-gods, which were the legacy of early barbarism, and they too were humanized. The eagle, the raven, the snake, the wolf were originally forms under which the god manifested himself: in Greek hands they become his attendants or attributes. Hera and Athene took the forms of women, but kept from the shapes which they once wore, the one a cow's mild glance (*βοῶπις*), the other the keen grey eyes of the owl (*γλαυκῶπις*). So again inanimate nature became not merely animate, but human. The Greek could not think of rivers without their river-gods, or of sun and moon apart from their divinities. Naiads live in springs and are the authors of their clearness; Dryads are the tree-spirits that die when the tree is felled. A sudden fright seizes some shepherds as they feed their flock on the hillside; it was Pan who peered out at them from among the rocks. A girl was blown over a cliff; the North Wind had carried her away to be his playmate. Such were the legends that the Greek invented, and it was a human place that he made of the world.

What he did for God and Nature, that the Greek did for his daily life. He humanized it. Some thinkers—S. Paul, Pascal, Byron are among them—have seen in man a twofold nature, god and beast; and finding no

[1] *Nem.* vi. 1 f. (tr. Myers).

reconciliation between his two natures, have been agonized by the conflict within this being

> Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
> To sink or soar. . . .[1]

The Greek was not conscious of such a distinction; he only saw a unity 'glorious in its action and itself', in which humanity was not distinct from divinity, nor body from soul. S. Paul and Pascal found no escape from this horrible dualism within except by the intervention of God. They threw themselves on His grace. *Pour faire d'un homme un saint il faut bien que ce soit la grâce; et qui en doute ne sait ce que c'est que saint et qu'homme.*[2] The Greek had not felt the difficulty and did not need the solution. Hard work, he thought, would achieve all that was possible to man. 'The anxious thought of youth conjoined with toil achieves renown,' said Pindar.[3] You would have found it impossible to explain to a Greek what this 'grace' was; if he were an Orphic, he would have had a glimpse of your meaning; but there is no word in classical Greek which answers to it. S. Paul and Pascal felt that the evil, *infectum scelus*, must always remain while they were clothed with the flesh, and for final deliverance looked forward to a future life. The Greek believed that human nature could, and sometimes did, achieve its end on earth. Of an after-life he had the vaguest ideas, and such as he had were in no way consoling. Homer had spoken of asphodel meadows, where, bloodless and unhappy, flit the ghosts of those who were once so full of life; where Achilles could say that he would rather be a labourer on the tiniest of human farms than a king over all the dead. And not less gloomy, if less definite

[1] *Manfred*, I. 2. [2] Pascal, *Pensées*, 508. [3] fr. 207 (Bergk).

than this, is the conception of a future life which dominates Greek literature. Here are characteristic sentiments from different centuries. 'When a man is dead all his glory is gone.' He is 'dust and ashes; what is nought turns to nothing'. He has 'no strength nor veins that throb with blood'. 'What of the underworld?' asks an epitaph of the man over whom it is set. 'Deep darkness,' comes the reply. Better so, thinks Macaria, the Athenian girl who gives up her life that the suppliant children of Heracles may live. 'I pray that there may be nothing below the earth; if we mortals that are to die have sorrow even there, I know not where to turn; for death is thought the supreme medicine for misfortune.'[1] At best there was a sickening uncertainty:

> If any far-off state there be,
> Dearer to life than mortality;
> The hand of the Dark hath hold thereof,
> And mist is under and mist above.
> And so we are sick for life and cling
> On earth to this nameless and shining thing.
> For other life is a fountain sealed,
> And the depths below are unrevealed,
> And we drift on legends ever.[2]

μύθοις ἄλλως φερόμεσθα: 'we drift on legends ever'. Greek literature, usually so definite, so precise in colour and form, here alone is vague and indefinite. Except for two great writers[3] it has no New Jerusalem, descending visibly out of heaven, mapped and measured, named and described; no worshipping multitude of spirits, who were dead and are alive. Its New Jerusalem was on earth; its

[1] The references above are to Homer, *Od.* 11.488 f.; Stesichorus, fr. 52; Euripides, fr. 536; Aeschylus, fr. 226; *Anth. Pal.* 7. 524; Eur. *Heracl.* 592 ff. My instances are mainly taken from Rohde, *Psyche*, 2. 198–263.

[2] Eur. *Hipp.* 191 f. (tr. Murray).

[3] Pindar and Plato, with whom Chapter VII tries to deal.

ideal was a human paradise. If he had health, if he escaped poverty and exceptional sorrow, if he lived with repute in the small city where he was born, if he was happy in his friends and family, if he left behind him children to perpetuate his name—then the ordinary Greek felt that he and the world had done their duty to each other. A philosopher would have added something more, freedom to develop his intellect and his moral nature.[1] But of a personal relation to God, of God's grace, of a future life, neither philosopher nor ordinary man thought. Recall three Greek definitions of happiness, and observe how they justify this view. The first is by Pindar: 'Two things alone there are that cherish life's bloom to its utmost sweetness amid the fair flowers of wealth—to have good success and to win therefor fair fame. Seek not to be a god: if the portion of these honours fall to thee, thou hast already all. The things of mortals best befit mortality.'[2] The second is attributed to Solon and approved by Herodotus: 'If a man is sound in limb, free from disease, free from misfortune, happy in his children, and himself goodlooking: if in addition he ends his life well, he may rightly be termed happy.'[3] The third is from Aristotle: 'Happiness may be defined as prosperity conjoined with virtue, or as independence of life, or as the pleasantest life conjoined with safety, or as an abundance of goods and slaves with the ability to preserve them and make a practical use of them; it would be pretty generally admitted that happiness is one or more of these things. Such then being the definition of happiness, it follows that its constituent parts are nobility, the possession of many and excellent friends, wealth, a goodly and numerous

[1] Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, has written the moral philosophy of humanism. [2] *Isthm.* 4. 12. [3] Herod. 1. 32.

family and a happy old age; also such physical excellence as health, beauty, strength, stature, and athletic powers, and finally fame, honour, good fortune, and virtue.'[1] Famous and representative definitions, these tell us what the Greek asked of life. If Christ had given a definition of happiness, it would have been in different terms.

It is related of Robert Hall that he 'confessed that reading Miss Edgeworth hindered him for a week in his clerical functions; he was completely disturbed by her pictures of a world of happy active people without any visible interference of religion—a sensible and on the whole healthy world, yet without warnings, without exhortations, without any apparent terrors concerning the state of souls'.[2] The people who disconcerted Robert Hall's devotions might well have been Greeks.

The Greek humanized life. This does not mean that he made it animal, nor must we suppose that he interpreted it simply in terms of sense and animal desire. It was not so. Coarsely minded men among the Greeks put a coarse construction on human nature, ate, drank, and indulged themselves, and looked on such indulgence as the best thing in life. But the better sort thought differently. To them humanity meant the exercise of natural gifts, the enjoyment of natural pleasures; and the close of the preface to Ruskin's *Crown of Wild Olives* shows not unfairly what this people, having resigned the hope of immortality and contenting themselves with making the best they could out of earth, saw in life and asked from it. 'They knew that life brought its contest; but they expected from it also the crown of all contest. No proud one! no jewelled circlet flaming through

[1] Ar. *Rhet.* 1360 b, 14.
[2] Quoted in Lewes, *Life of Goethe*, bk. vi. c. 2.

heaven above the height of the unmerited throne; only some few leaves of wild olive, cool to the tired brow, through a few years of peace. The wreath was to be of *wild* olive, mark you;—the tree that grows carelessly, tufting the rocks with no vivid bloom, no verdure of branch; only with soft snow of blossom and scarcely fulfilled fruit, mixed with grey leaf and thorn-set stem; no fastening of diadem for you but with such sharp embroidery! But this, such as it was, they might win while yet they lived; type of grey honour and sweet rest. Free-heartedness, and graciousness, and undisturbed trust, and requited love, and the sight of the peace of others, and ministry to their pain;—these and the blue sky above them, and the sweet waters and flowers of the earth beneath.' [1]

These words are truer of their author than of the nation to whom he applied them, for there is more savour of the earth about the Greeks than Ruskin lets us feel. Yet no one can read Greek literature without finding that it brings him close to a people who are human in the best sense of the word. We see this in Homer, who is the singer not only of war, feasting, and travel, but also of quiet domestic life. To us Hector is the terrible hero, who wades through blood with his gleaming bronze and nodding crest; Homer remembered that he was a man too, and shows him comforting his wife and playing with his child. To us Odysseus is a prototype of the mariner with a lie for every emergency and a wife in every port; Homer tells us also, how he went in disguise to greet the father who had not seen him for twenty years, found him in leather gaiters and gauntlets 'because of the thorns', digging in the vineyard and 'nursing his sorrow', and

[1] For purposes of quotation I have altered a few unimportant words.

was surprised out of his deceits by intense pity at the sight. Such poetry is typical of a very human people.

Very human, too, are the ten Corinthians of whom Herodotus tells a story—it is the only incident in their life which we know. An oracle had warned them against an infant who was one day to be the ruin of their state, and they resolved on the cruel but not unnatural precaution of putting it to death. Their plan failed, and the reason for its failure tells us something about the temperament of these cruel conspirators, and about that of the historian who delighted to describe their behaviour. 'They went into Eëtion's courtyard and asked for the baby. Its mother, ignorant of their purpose and fancying that they asked out of friendship to its father, gave the infant into the hands of one of them. Now they had agreed on the road that the one who first received the child should dash it to the ground. But it happened by a divine chance that the child smiled at the man who took it; and he noticing it was seized with pity and was unable to destroy it, so he gave it to the second and he to the third, till it thus passed through the hands of all the ten, and no one of them would destroy it. Then they gave the child back to its mother and went outside. There they stopped at the gate and began to blame and reproach each other, but particularly him who had first received the child.'[1] The writer of this was a very human man.

And turn to figures less fabulous than these. Xenophon has left us some random sketches of his friends, which show what Greeks of the best kind were like. We are not to regard these men as poets or philosophers or in any way exceptional. They were average Greeks of the

[1] Herod. 5. 92.

better sort; and Xenophon's own career and character is typical of theirs. He was a successful and adventurous soldier, one of the leaders of the Ten Thousand, who made that famous march through the mountains of Anatolia. Later he settled in the country and spent his days in hunting and literature. He wrote a history of his own time, memoirs of Socrates, tractates on education, on household management, on hunting, on commanding cavalry, on buying and keeping horses. In the words of a biographer 'he was a man remarkable in many ways, notably, as his writings show, in his taste for hunting and military pursuits; a pious man who loved to offer sacrifices, was versed in religious matters, and was a faithful disciple of Socrates'. His friends were not unlike himself.

Among them are Crito, Cebes, and the rest, of whom he tells us that they associated with Socrates, 'not that they might become popular speakers or successful barristers, but in order to grow into good and noble men, and learn how rightly to conduct themselves to their households and servants, their relations and friends, their country and fellow-countrymen.'[1] Is it possible to sum up human morality more concisely or more completely than in these words? Then there is Ischomachus, who had realized 'that unless we know what we ought to do and take pains to bring it about, God has decided that we have no right to prosperity; but if we are wise and painstaking, He grants it to some of us, though not to others. So to start with, I reverence Him; and then I do my best to act so as to be entitled, when I pray, to obtain health and physical strength and the respect of my fellow-Athenians and the affection of my friends and an increase

[1] *Mem.* I. 2. 48.

of wealth—with honour—and safety in war—with honour'.[1] Finally, a more personal portrait, there is the young Hermogenes, who is 'wasting away for love of nobleness; look at his serious brow, his steady glance, the temperateness of what he says, the gentleness of his voice, the cheerfulness of his temper; although he has friends among the most august of the gods, he never despises us mortals.'[2] Whatever faults these men may have had, they were not mere animals. Their ideals are those which we like to attribute to the best kind of English gentleman.

Such were Xenophon's friends among themselves. The following conversation between one of them and his wife shows the spirit in which they approached marriage. The husband is speaking. '"Your parents on your behalf, and I on my own, reflected as to the best person either of us could find to share a home and children; and I chose you and your parents chose me, out of the persons available. If God gives us children, we shall consult together about the best way of bringing them up; we shall need them to help us and support us in old age; and this is an interest we have in common. But at present we share this household. I put all I have into the common stock, and you have done the same with your dowry. We are not to count which of us has contributed the greater sum; we are to remember that whichever of us is the better partner makes the more valuable contribution." My wife answered: "How can I help you in this? what does my power come to? Everything rests on you, and my mother told me that my business was to live soberly (σωφρονεῖν)." "Yes, and that is just what my father said

[1] *Oecon.* 11. 8.

[2] *Sympos.* 8. 3. It is an interesting picture of what a Greek really meant by a καλὸς κἀγαθός.

to me. But a sober-living man and wife look to the preservation of their fortune, and add to it what rightly and honourably they can." "But what," she said, "do you see that I can do to increase it?" "Why," I replied, "do as well as you can what God created you to do and what the law approves."'[1] And then he goes on to explain the duties of a mother and the mistress of a household as he conceives them.

These words illustrate very well the view of life to which, under ordinary circumstances, Greek humanism led. There is nothing ideal, mystical, or romantic in this conception of marriage; it is viewed as a very human thing;—note the utilitarian uses of children, and the stress laid on the duty of increasing one's income. Yet tenderness, mutual comfort, and affection are also there; the bond is much more than animal. The light that never was on sea or land does not fall on it; yet it is warmed and brightened by the common everyday sun.

In the same temper Ischomachus and his wife go about the business of training and managing their servants. 'For housekeeper we chose the woman we thought would be most temperate in food, drink, and sleep; one who had a good memory, and was most likely to think how she could please us and win our esteem. In happy hours we shared our happiness with her and in hours of distress we invited her sympathy; so we taught her to be loyal to us. We took her into the counsels of our household and let her share in its prosperity; so we made her eager for its advantage. We honoured goodness, and pointed out to her that the good were better off and had more liberty than the bad; so we taught her to be good.'[2] Whether servants can really be managed in this way is another

[1] *Oec.* 7. 11 f. [2] *Oec.* 9. 11.

question. But if they can, the post of housekeeper to Ischomachus must have been a pleasant one. Not that there is any great idealism in this picture of a Greek household or in the principles on which it was ruled. The master and mistress simply assume that unspoilt human beings are by nature kindly and honest ; that it is natural that they should be this and not the opposite, for kindliness and honesty prosper best in the world ; and that if you treat your servants with sympathy, they will be interested in your prosperity and do their part in contributing to it.

It is a purely human view of life, but in practice not a bad one. Holding to it, a man knows exactly where he stands, what he can do, and what he may look forward to. He knows the worst that can happen to him, and has only to make up his mind to enjoy the good and endure the bad. In his gloomiest moments he might perhaps say with Pascal : 'Le dernier acte est sanglant, quelque belle que soit la comédie en tout le reste ; on jette enfin de la terre sur la tête, et en voilà pour jamais.' But he would never say, 'Je blâme également, et ceux qui prennent parti de louer l'homme, et ceux qui le prennent de le blâmer, et ceux qui le prennent de se divertir ; et je ne puis approuver que ceux qui cherchent en gémissant.'[1] For there are none of the haunting uncertainties of modern religion about the Greek view of life ; no dark corners, no likelihood of skeletons in the cupboard. It is a clear air, and in it we are not baffled by mists, which rise and fall, but never entirely lift ; and which hold behind them endless possibilities that can never be quite brought to the test.

In Xenophon we see humanism at its best, and, without looking at its dark side, we may pass to see how a humanist

[1] *Pensées*, 210, 421.

takes life. But, in passing, let us emphasize once more the interest to us of this human view of the world.

It is here that Hellenism parts company with Christianity, or at any rate with the prevailing Christian theory. Hellenism dispenses with the need for a deity, a future life, and a purely spiritual world. It is not essentially inconsistent with these beliefs, and they have often been found in union with it; but it can do without them. Abolish them for the Greek, and he would still live the same life as if they were there. For him the whole creation was not groaning and travailing in pain. He was waiting for no glory to be revealed, with which the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared. The glory was already present to his eyes: flesh and blood for him did, or might, already in this terrestrial world possess the kingdom of God. He could live with satisfaction in the present, and forgo the necessity of a redemption to come. But abolish the unseen world for the Christian, and the whole meaning and value of life is altered. If there is anything permanent in Christianity it is the certain persuasion that the world is not an adequate theatre for man, nor he capable of reaching the perfection of his nature unaided. Again and again in the teaching of the Church this conviction breaks out: it underlies the doctrines of the Fall, of Predestination and Reprobation, of Grace; it prompts that sense of homelessness here to which Christian writers give constant expression. *Omnia quae hic amantur et transeunt* are the words of Augustine; *ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem* is the epitaph of Newman; *memoria hospitis unius diei praetereuntis* is Pascal's summary of our life.

There are few more important problems than this—is humanism right? Is it right to take a purely human

attitude towards life, to assume that man is the measure of all things, and to believe that, even though the unseen may be there, still we can know our duty and live our life without reference to it. That is perhaps the biggest question of the present day, the one most worth settling, the one which every one has to settle for himself.

If our minds are made up and we are humanists, then we are not likely to find better models than the Greeks. Of unaided human nature it is not too much to say that they made the best that can be made; in regard to the chief things of life, modern humanists are not likely to come to conclusions different from or better than those of a people whose acuteness of insight amounts almost to inspiration; and they can hardly find better or wiser teachers than its great men.

But if we approach the subject as inquirers, anxious to learn to what humanism leads and whether it will work, still we must turn to Athens. There alone the experiment of humanism has been tried; the only evidence about it we can get is the evidence from Greek society. There we can see how it succeeds; whether it tends to strength, to racial survival; whether it leads to justice, righteousness, mercy, true happiness; or whether the sins, whose long catalogue closes the first chapter of S. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, are the logical and finally inevitable issue of life for those peoples who worship and serve the creature more than the Creator.

Let us now form some idea of the view of life to which humanism commits us.

If we wish to know how a humanist looks at the world, we must first forget our own view of it, dismiss alike our prejudices and our convictions (especially theological),

and forgo that knowledge which in the course of years humanity has achieved. We must approach the subject with the open mind of ignorance and in the temper in which the conventional stranger from Mars is supposed to view the world. Imagine, then, that we arrive upon earth, with no preconceived notions about it or its inhabitants, and try to discover what man is, in order that we may decide what he should do. We meet our first human being; and it becomes at once clear to us that he is a composite being, composite of body and mind—to use the latter term in its widest sense. Which of these elements is most important, which is man to satisfy, the first, the second, or both?

First, the body would force itself on our attention, visible, tangible, and certain; present with us from life to death; with needs that must be met if we are to exist at all; with imperious desires clamouring for satisfaction; the seat of intense and gross pleasures, and yet of fine and spiritual ones too; gorging itself to repletion, besotted in the harlots' houses, drinking itself drunk, hunting, riding, fishing, tasting all the fine exultation of bodily exercise. Surely this is the central, certain, dominant reality. And if we think so, we shall reply that bodily good is the good thing, and devote ourselves to securing health, health at all costs, and money and friends in sufficiency to satisfy the body's demands and minister to its enjoyments.

In such a view there would be something very Greek. The Greek looked at man, and the first thing that struck him as he looked was the importance of the body; he never forgot the lesson, even when thought and experience had naturally carried him past it. That was natural; for the body is the most certain, tangible, real thing in man,

and the Greek always grasped after what was tangible and certain. We will take some illustrations. Let the reader ask himself what three wishes he would make, if he were assured of being granted them. Here is a Greek view in a proverb, quoted or alluded to five times by no less a writer than Plato. 'First comes health, second personal beauty, then wealth honestly come by, fourthly to be young with one's friends.'[1] A surprising order of

[1] During two successive years I asked a lecture class to put on paper four wishes in order of preference. The answers were so various that one or two had to be omitted and the rest grouped under heads, but the general result was as follows:

Health	54
Spiritual or Moral Excellence	47
Friendship or Domestic Happiness	35
Intellectual Excellence	32
Contentment	29
Artistic Pleasures	15
Physical Excellence	13
Success	13
Hard Work	10
Travel	8
Wealth	8

The individual answers were naturally more interesting than these groups. As a whole they show instructive differences from the Greek point of view: notably in the comparative indifference to wealth and physical excellence, and in the appearance of items like travel. The lists varied somewhat in the two years; in the first, art, travel, and hard work were prominent: the latter two were ignored in the second year, and art almost ignored. But otherwise the agreement was exact, wealth (as opposed to reasonable means, which were reckoned under the head of contentment) coming in both cases at the bottom of the list.

Perhaps in this connexion it is worth quoting Stevenson's three wishes, in his own words.

1. Good health.
2. Two to three hundred a year.
3. *O du lieber Gott!* friends.

In regard to the proverb quoted in the text, it must be remem-

merit, to our ideas. So again, Aristotle thinks that the highest thing a man can aspire to is wisdom, the intellectual contemplation of God ; yet no man, he thinks, can be happy 'who is absolutely ugly'.[1] One of Xenophon's young friends was of the same opinion: for he swears 'by all the gods that he would not choose the empire of Persia instead of beauty'.[2] There is no false idealism about these sentiments; the Greek thought it a great misfortune to be bad-looking or poor, and he was quite frank in saying so; his were concrete ambitions and redolent of earth. Yet one would hardly call them materialistic. It is the spiritualization of what is earthy, the idealism of common things, that is typical of the Greek.

The predominance of the body ; we see it in the abiding passion for personal beauty and physical strength; in the idealization of the athlete; in the sculpture that developed its ideals as it watched in the gymnasia the naked human form ; in the charm of Alcibiades ; in the mythical story of the acquittal of Phryne ; in the legend how Pisistratus came to Athens in the train of a country-woman of surprising beauty, giving her out to be the goddess Athene, and so was accepted by the Athenians as their ruler. Xenophon mentions as qualifications for high political office, 'good birth, and physique eminently comely to the outward eye, and capable of supporting hard work.'[3] (How few modern statesmen would satisfy

bered that it is part of a *skolion*, and any deductions from it as to Greek ideals should be corrected by a reference to the definitions of happiness given on p. 115. Still, Plato would not have quoted it so often if he had felt no sympathy with the views it expresses.

[1] *Nic. Eth.* 1099 b, 4.

[2] Xen. *Symp.* 4. 11.

[3] Xen. *Symp.* 8. 40 σῶμα ἀξιοπρεπέστατον μὲν ἰδεῖν, ἱκανὸν δὲ μόχθους ὑποφέρειν.

the second of these conditions!) Plato, who in many things falls away from the Greek ideal, keeps this particular element. For him physical beauty is the natural expression of the beauty of the soul, and when he wishes to describe the unworthy philosopher, whose championship is the supreme degradation of philosophy, he portrays him under the likeness of an 'undersized baldheaded tinker'. And what poet has ever drawn a picture of youth and health like this?

Just Cause:
Nay, bright will be your hours and fresh with busy round of play,
You'll never bandy naughty jests like young men of to-day
About the streets, nor lord yourself in some vexatious case,
But down in Academe between the olives you will race,
Bright grasses bound about your head, in honest company
Fragrant of woodbine and of ease and budding poplar tree
And greet, where maple sighs to elm, the springtide merrily.

If to my words you give good heed
My counsel you abide
A goodly chest and clearest skin
Are yours, and shoulders wide.
Few words will lie upon your tongue
But sound you'll be in limb and lung.[1]

A very attractive young man; and born, if we are to believe Aristophanes, into a world admirably adapted to the young. No one can read Greek literature without feeling its delight in all the rich variety of physical existence. The Greek felt and expressed an extraordinarily

[1] Aristoph. *Clouds*, 1002 ff. Here are three lines from the original:

στεφανωσάμενος καλάμῳ λευκῷ μετὰ σώφρονος ἡλικιώτου
μίλακος ὄζων καὶ ἀπραγμοσύνης καὶ λεύκης φυλλοβολούσης
ἦρος ἐν ὥρᾳ χαίρων, ὁπόταν πλάτανος πτελέᾳ ψιθυρίζῃ.

How admirable a phrase is ὄζων ἀπραγμοσύνης! I owe the translation to my former pupil, Mr. P. J. Patrick.

keen pleasure in being able to eat and drink and run and play and be young with his friends, in pleasures *γλυκέα κἀδάπανα καὶ φίλα*,[1] in dances, shows, processions, high animal spirits, a direct and eminently natural sense of humour, and, if we are to believe Aristophanes, in all kinds of cakes and sweet confectionery. Dickens, in English, has something of this feeling with his Christmas feasting and coach-drives through the frosty air. But there is far more of it in Greek literature. Look, for instance, at the lyrists, Alcaeus, Hipponax and Archilochus particularly. When they were not fighting they were feasting or celebrating their fights and feasts in verse, writing skolia which thrill the most abstemious man with the mere pleasure of eating and drinking. What a genial ruffianism breathes through the words of Hipponax: 'Take my coat, I will hit Bupalus in the eye; for I am ambidextrous and I never miss my aim.'[2] And what a healthy thirst is here: 'We drank out of the decanter, for it had lost its glass; for the boy fell on it and broke it.'[3]

As genial and less fragmentary is the lineal descendant of these joyous bon vivants, Aristophanes. We will not violate with a translation a passage which Frere left unfinished on his deathbed, but if any one will turn to the *Peace* (ll. 1140 f.), he will find a picture of country life in Attica, which rivals Christmas at Dingley Dell in jollity, and far surpasses it in the indefinable grace of its narrative. The corn is in the ground, a soft rain is falling, and some farmers seize the heaven-sent opportunity for a holiday. The maid is sent to call in the labourer off the soaking farm. The wife is told to fetch some figs, and toast beans and wheat together. Then there is a thrush, two finches, a beestings pudding and four hare pies in the larder—

[1] Aristoph. *Peace*, 592. [2] fr. 83. [3] fr. 38.

unless the weasel has got them[1]; she was making a great noise there last night; three pies are for the drinkers, and one for the old father. Then a slave can fetch a dessert of myrtle-berries from a neighbour, and on the way call in Charinades to drink the health of the growing crops.

The same joyous spirit breathes in passages more elevated in tone. 'Come,' says the poet in one of his plays, 'come, ye daughters who bring the rain, come to the splendid land of Athens, and see a country rich in loveliness, rich in men. Here is the majesty of inviolate shrines, here are statues and soaring temples, here are processions, sacred, blessed, and, through every season of the year, flower-crowned feasts and festivals of gods. Here, as spring advances, comes the glory of the wine-god, and the musical delight of dancing, and the deep-toned melody of the flute.'[2] It is an invocation to the Clouds, but other people and other ages have felt the charm of his call, and gone in thought with him to 'the flowering meadows deep in roses',[3] where half the town were making holiday, men and women, young and old together, 'leaping, mocking, dancing, playing,'[4] with their prayer to Demeter:

> Approach, O Queen of orgies pure,
> And us thy faithful band ensure
> From morn to eve to ply secure
>   Our mocking and our clowning:
> To grace thy feast with many a hit
> Of merry jest or serious wit,
> And laugh, and earn the prize, and flit
>   Triumphant to the crowning.[5]

For the Attic festivals, like those of the Roman Church, joined recreation with religion, and were jovial, human holidays. Such, for instance, was the race to Phalerum

[1] The Greeks had no tame cats, but kept weasels to deal with mice. [2] *Clouds*, 300 f. [3] *Frogs*, 449.
[4] Ibid. 374 f. (tr. Murray). [5] Ibid. 386 f.

at the Oschophoria, in which, after the religious ceremonies were over, all the youth of Athens took part, the day ending with a universal picnic on the shores of the bay. Such was the dancing on greased skins at the Dionysia; and a sport mentioned by Suidas in which drinkers standing on inflated wine-skins, at a signal from a trumpet, drank for a prize. Such were the ceremonies at the Great Panathenaea, to be seen to-day in stone on the walls of the British Museum, though the idealized figures of the Elgin Marbles give us little idea of the gaiety of the real scene. There were boat-races, torch-races, foot-races, horse-races, dances of men in full armour, leaping in and out of flying chariots, javelin-throwing from horseback, cock-fighting, musical and gymnastic contests, prizes for manly beauty, recitations from Homer, a speech by a chosen orator of the day, and, finally, the great procession to the Acropolis, in which a sacred ship was drawn through the city, the yellow embroidered robe destined for the statue of Athena Polias blowing out from its mast, and the whole population of Athens, on foot, on horseback, in chariots, following in its train.

> How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
> All the heart, and the soul, and the senses for ever in joy!

Yes, and the senses counted for more with the Greek than with us: and we will allow ourselves to be brought back to them and the body, our original theme, by considering the Greek's view of old age. When youth wore away, he felt (and it is difficult for a humanist not to feel) that what made life worth living was gone. In part, perhaps, it was that old age had terrors for the Greeks which we do not feel. They were without eyeglasses, ear-trumpets, bathchairs, and the elaborate system of *apéritifs*,

which modern science has devised to assist our declining days. Yet even with these consolations, it may be doubted whether the Greek would have faced old age with pleasure. At least, to judge from Greek literature, he lamented its minor discomforts less than the loss of youth's intense capacity for action and enjoyment. People who prize beauty and health so highly can hardly think otherwise when age comes and they

> . . . feel her slowly chilling breath invade
> The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with grey;
> They feel her finger light
> Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;—
> The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,
> The heart less bounding at emotion new,
> And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.[1]

The following passage, taken from one of Plato's dialogues, shows how the ordinary Greek hated old age, and why he hated it. The speaker is an elderly friend of the philosopher. 'I and a few other people of my own age are in the habit of frequently meeting together. On these occasions most of us give way to lamentations, and regret the pleasures of youth, and call up the memory of love affairs and drinking parties and similar proceedings. They are grievously discontented at the loss of what they consider great privileges, and describe themselves as living well in those days, whereas now, by their own account, they cannot be said to live at all. Some also complain of the manner in which their relations insult their infirmities, and make this a ground for reproaching old age with the many miseries it occasions them.'[2] It is true that Plato himself did not think thus of old age, for he makes the speaker say that the real cause of these

[1] Arnold, *Thyrsis*. I have altered 'I' into 'They'.
[2] *Rep.* 329.

men's discontent lay not in their age but their characters. Still to some such dismal conclusion the humanist view of life tends to lead; that it did so lead in Greece is shown by the words 'most of us'. Plato's own view was the unusual one. Greek writers in general are gloomy on the subject of old age. They do not call it beautiful or peaceful or mellow; their epithets for it are *λυγρός*, *βαρύς*, 'dismal,' 'oppressive,' and at best they allow that it brings wisdom. Pindar and Aeschylus seem to have taken the most favourable view of old age, and even Pindar calls it 'detested'. It is true that Plato represents Sophocles as welcoming its approach. But few traces of such contentment are apparent in his plays, and no one has ever used bitterer words of advancing years than those with which he closes a chorus of the *Oedipus at Colonus*: 'that is the final lot of man, even old age, hateful, impotent, unsociable, friendless, wherein all evil of evil dwells.' [1]

Humanism is a better gospel for the young, the healthy, and the prosperous, than for the old, the sick, or the unfortunate, and in this context it is worth recalling Augustine's memorable criticism on the Greeks. He is talking of what he learnt from Plato, and after admitting the magnitude of his debt, adds the words, *nemo ibi audit vocantem, Venite ad me qui laboratis*, 'In those pages none hear the call, Come to me all ye that labour.' [2]

But with all their feeling for bodily excellence and their dread of bodily ill, the Greeks were very far from being

[1] *O. C.* 1236. The most pessimistic passage in Greek on old age is Aristotle's brutal account of the characteristics of old men, *Rhet.* 2. 13. Even more impressive is the praise of youth in Euripides *H. F.* 637 ff., where he suggests that if God thought as a man, he would reward virtue with the gift of a second youth.

[2] *Conf.* 7. 21.

mere animals or mere athletes. Looking at human nature, they saw another element, the intellect, a faculty ministering to a strange need called a sense of truth ; often so destructive of beliefs on which our happiness rests that we are tempted to deny it ; often killing or corrupting the body, and, together with the body, itself ; yet indispensable to material success, and with worthier uses besides. To this element in human nature the Greeks gave full weight ; and not the philosophers only, but the ordinary man. Common Athenians formed the audience of the Greek drama ; and it was said of them in a later day that they spent their time 'in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing'. It was naturally so. There was always some new intellectual interest in fifth-century Athens. A rhapsode was reciting Homer ; or a play by one of the Three was being exhibited, or Anaxagoras was unfolding those theories of the universe which were later condemned as atheistical, or Herodotus reading his account of travels through Egypt and Asia, or Protagoras enouncing the theory of grammar, or Gorgias illustrating the technique of style, and many a sophist beside, whose name has perished with his writings, discussing, or ready to discuss, any subject in heaven or earth.

Think of the picture of Greek life afforded by the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon. Between the years 440 and 400 B.C. a visitor to Athens would have seen, during the forenoon in the market-place, at other times in one of the gymnasia or of the covered walks which were found in all Greek cities, a strongly built but ugly man, talking to a small group of people. The subjects of the conversation were not such as we should expect to-day to hear in similar spots in England, in Piccadilly, for instance, or outside the

Stock Exchange. These Greeks would be discussing the meaning of religion and irreligion, discussing what are beauty and ugliness, what are justice and courage, what are the qualities that make men good rulers, and how to define 'city' or 'government'. We might be surprised to hear such conversations held in public, and to learn that the speakers discussed these subjects, because they thought that knowledge of them was indispensable to a καλὸς κἀγαθός, while ignorance of them was the mark of a slave.

It must be remembered that now we are not speaking of the professional philosophers, but of the ordinary Athenian. He it was who felt himself 'possessed and maddened with the passion for knowledge'.[1] Generals, cavalry officers, courtesans, painters, country gentlemen, aspiring or disappointed politicians, came to discuss their affairs with Socrates, and went away enlightened on subjects as various as house-building, painting, picnicking, operations of war, indigestion, and physical exercise.[2] The *Memorabilia*, which professes to record their conversations, shows how rational the ordinary Greek was, how much more inclined to appeal and listen to reason than, for instance, the ordinary Englishman. Men bring common disputes and practical disagreements to Socrates for settlement. Two brothers have quarrelled and he reconciles them. A young cavalry officer discusses with him how he can best work up his regiment to efficiency, and Socrates points out to him that unless he is a good speaker he will never make a good officer.[3] A certain Aristarchus, who in the

[1] Plato, *Symp.* 218 B.

[2] *Mem.* 3. 8. Ibid. 10. Ibid. 14. Ibid. *passim.* Ibid. 13. Ibid. 12.

[3] Xen. *Mem.* 3. 3. 11.

later years of the Peloponnesian War was obliged to support a number of his ruined female relatives, and was nearly beggared by the expense, asks and receives Socrates' advice as to what he shall do. Here is Xenophon's account of the interviews. *S.* 'Why this difficulty, Aristarchus? Ceramon has a number of slaves' mouths to feed, yet he thrives on it.' *A.* 'Yes, they are slaves.' *S.* 'Are not your lady cousins better than slaves?' *A.* 'Certainly.' *S.* 'Is it not a shame that he should make out of slaves what you fail to make out of the free-born?' *A.* 'But his are skilled workers.' *S.* 'Well, a skilled worker is one who knows how to make something useful?' *A.* 'Yes.' *S.* 'And are not bread and dresses useful?' *A.* 'Very.' *S.* 'Then why not make your female relatives do what Ceramon's slaves do and support themselves?'[1]

What! it may be said; are you trying to persuade us that the Greek with his sudden revulsions of feeling, with his blind outbursts of pity and panic and cruelty, was an eminently rational being? Is this the lesson of the Corcyrean massacres, or of the Mytilenaean debate? Well, paradox as it may seem, there are grounds for believing it true. The Greeks had indeed the emotional temperament of a southern nation, but they were continually fighting to keep it in subjection to reason. There is the *Memorabilia* to witness to it, there is the long line of Greek philosophers; and the true type of his race was seized by Plato in the *Phaedrus*, where he figures the human soul as a charioteer, struggling with an unruly horse, his animal nature, but striving to recall and retain in his memory the vision of truth and temperance and justice and beauty, which he saw before birth, when he drove across heaven in the company of the gods. Often the struggle ended in defeat;

[1] Xen. *Mem.* 2. 7.

but the greatest Greeks did succeed in reining in the rebellious horse, and reaching an Olympian peace, where all traces are lost of the storms through which they have come. We know that Sophocles, we may suspect that Plato, were men of violent animal passions, and only reached freedom after a long struggle with 'many mad tyrants'. Yet few would imagine it in gazing on the tranquil surface of their art.

Perhaps none of this comes intimately home to us. Under the dissecting knife the living cease to live, and when we display in conspicuous isolation qualities which in the flesh were blended, the Greek ceases to be a human being and appears as a compound of an aesthete, a holiday-maker and a prig. Then, too, the details of his life are alien and remote from ours. We give no prizes for physical beauty, and the Greek praises of it sound strained to our ears; the conversations of Socrates are apt to weary us; Greece seems very far away. Yet there are two places in England in which, amid the smoke and wealth and elaboration of our life, an Athenian might for a moment feel himself at home. They are the seats of a population which possesses that *ἐκτὸς χορηγία* of worldly goods which Aristotle thought an indispensable preliminary to happiness, yet on the whole has too little wealth and too much taste for vulgar display; a population so far autochthonous that it is largely drawn from the owners of the soil and takes possession of the universe with an easy condescension; a population mainly young, active, well developed in body and mind, in which the sophists would have found pupils, and Socrates such young men as he loved to converse with, and Alcibiades humours equal to his own, and the Olympic victors rivals of

their athletic grace. Surely of Oxford and Cambridge most of the Funeral Speech of Pericles is still *mutatis mutandis* true; or at least those most often quoted words from it, *φιλοκαλοῦμεν μετ' εὐτελείας καὶ φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας*. 'We are lovers of beauty without extravagance and of wisdom without effeminacy.'

NOTE.—For the sake of clearness I have laid stress, in the earlier part of this chapter, on the differences between humanism and Christianity. But, as a logician might say, they are opposites, not contradictories: indeed (and the later part of the chapter should show it), humanism may fitly be regarded as complementary to any except the most ascetic Christianity. What I mean, is this. Judaea taught men their relation to God, and indicated that their faculties were to be used in His service. But it says nothing of the nature of these faculties. Hence it is impossible to get a *content* of life from Judaea; it is impossible to live after the manner of the Jew, for the sufficient reason that, if we tried it, we should have so little to do. A highly civilized man cannot spend his time in worship or agriculture or trade, for he is not born exclusively to pray or plough or make money. He has many faculties and instincts, and the Greek, who conceived of art and literature and political life is the best example to which he can turn, if he wishes to employ these faculties worthily. This is the point where humanism is complementary to Judaism.

CHAPTER V

TWO TYPES OF HUMANISM: PINDAR AND HERODOTUS

WE should make our points clearer if we could exhibit the Greek spirit in a typical Greek. But he is difficult to find. The authors we class together under the heading of Greek literature are widely different personalities, and few of them, one might almost say, typical Greeks. Great men of letters are not often completely typical of their nation; they are isolated, unique; whereas the portrait which would serve us best is that of an ordinary man, a man with the instincts, ideas, prejudices of his neighbours, and only differing from them in the possession of genius. Such a man it is not easy to find among the great names of Greek literature. We cannot turn to Thucydides; there is nothing popular about his grave and sober and philosophic view of life: nor to Aristophanes; the comic mask is a distortion, and we catch only a glimpse of the man behind: nor to Aeschylus; for he is Titanic and unique in any age. Plato and Euripides will not help us, for they are spirits in revolt against their time. Sophocles perhaps comes nearer to what we want, but his personality is hidden under his art. Or the orators; but men declaiming and posturing never show their real countenances clearly; Rhetoric, according to Plato, is a species of deception; and the character of the mistress is unconsciously reflected in her devotees. There are two great writers left, Pindar and Herodotus. Let us glance briefly at them.

Pindar is writing for the society that existed in the early part of the fifth century; for the society that fought and beat the Persians conceived the ideal of a united Greek nation, made a few generous, unpractical efforts to achieve it, failed and resigned the attempt. It was a society in which aristocracies were supreme; but Pindar saw democracy arise in one state after another, in some dispossess its hereditary lords, in almost all wage against them internecine war. Of these two great movements, the national and the democratic, there is hardly a trace in him. He has no interest in politics, either at home or abroad; he has no interest in the masses; if anything, a dislike for them. He writes for the rich, the noble, the 'upper classes'; and even here he is limited; his masterpieces were written for those who won athletic victories. It is as if a modern poet should confine himself to Oxford and Cambridge—indifferent to newer universities, indifferent to socialism and the working classes, indifferent to imperialism, to India, Egypt, or the Colonies; and in Oxford should celebrate mainly the exploits of 'blues'. It may seem a narrow field and typical of a narrow mind, and Pindar may appear a bad example of the Greek manysidedness. Yet on the other hand, just because he is not a very profound thinker, he probably represents the way in which an ordinary Greek looked at life, better than any of the great writers except perhaps Herodotus; and the peculiar Hellenic virtues stand out the more vividly against a background of convention.

He leaves us in no doubt as to what he thinks to be the highest happiness, and the enthusiastic Hellenist is apt to be shocked when he comes to Pindar's view of the ideal life. What Pindar covets and admires is no mystic vision of supersensual beauty, no intellectual grasp of

abstract truth, but an earthly, tangible, profitable good.[1] To start with, a man should be young and tall and handsome, and have those natural gifts which attract friends, help him to win races at Olympia, put him in a position to enjoy the good things of life, and make him, in a word, a success. He must have ἀγλαόγυιος ἥβη—'glorious-limbed youth'—you could not parallel the phrase outside Greek. The picture of Jason, as he comes down from the Centaur's cave among the forests of Pelion to claim the kingship which was his due, gives a clear notion of Pindar's, and indeed of the Greek, ideal of man. 'So in the fullness of time he came, wielding two spears, a wondrous man; and the vesture that was on him was twofold, the garb of the Magnetes country close fitting to his splendid limbs; but above he wore a leopard's skin to turn the hissing showers; nor were the bright locks of his hair shorn from him, but over all his back ran rippling down. Swiftly he went straight on, and took his stand, making trial of his dauntless soul, in the market-place when the multitude was full.'[2] This is the sort of man Pindar would like you to be.

Then, if you can choose your station in life, be a king—that is the crown and summit of human good. But in any case be rich, and wealth joined to—or in Pindar's expressive phrase, 'enamelled with'—the gifts of nature[3] will make you as secure as a man can be. It will give you chances which the ordinary man has not, it will suppress the deeper cares, and in the end it will bring you to the Paradise of the Just. So at least Pindar implies. A strange key it seems with which to open heaven. And yet there

[1] On his relation to Orphism see pp. 198, 200–1.

[2] *Pyth.* 4. 78. I have borrowed Mr. Myers's renderings in nearly every case.

[3] *Ol.* 2. 53 ff.

is some sense in Pindar's view; for the possession of wealth puts a man beyond the vulgar temptations of poverty, and it is a law of life that to him that hath more is given. Be rich, be strong, be handsome. This is the Greek grasping after facts, after hard, concrete, physical facts.

But supposing Nature has done her duty, and made you an athlete and a rich man, what of the world into which you are born? It seems a bad world on the whole. Any one glancing through a collection of Pindar's sayings might think them predominantly gloomy. Everywhere death is seen closing up the avenues of prosperity and success which these athletic triumphs open, and Pindar will not let the victor forget that he is putting his festal robes on a body which is mortal, and that at the last he will clothe himself in earth.[1] Even life itself is a dark thing. The poet is oppressed by thoughts of *πόνος* and *λήθη*, the hard work which is necessary to success, the oblivion which so soon and so remorselessly devours it. For man is 'a creature of a day, the dream of a shadow'.[2] Then, too, there are the ordinary misfortunes of human life, which Pindar thinks so many that 'heaven allots two sorrows to man for every good thing'.[3] Even his heroes are not exempt. Some one of these brilliant victors is in disfavour, or in exile, or has been disappointed of some hope. Perhaps there has been death in his house, or illness is sapping his strength, or old age has ended his triumphs and warns him of the approach of death; and 'there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither he goes'. Then, too, there are all those unnumbered hindrances, accidents, and checks to ambition, summed up in the bitter words of the

[1] *Nem.* 11. 15. [2] *Pyth.* 8. 95. [3] *Pyth.* 3. 81.

fourth Pythian: 'now this they say is of all griefs the sorest, that one knowing good should of necessity abide without lot therein.'[1] Pindar never holds his tongue about these things, and, if he were a modern, we should call him a pessimist. But he is Greek, and so a page or a line further on, and we are deep in one of those brilliantly coloured, 'purple' descriptions of joy or feasting or adventure of which he is a master, 'moving among feasting and giving up the soul to be young, carrying a bright harp and touching it in peace among the wise of the citizens.'[2]

Here is the Greek, determined, as far as he can see it, to tell himself the truth. There is no shirking facts, no pretending that evil is good and death pleasant; there is no attempt even to conceal the fact that such things exist. Yet the existence of evil is no argument for pessimism in Pindar's eyes. The skeleton is indeed brought out to fill his place; but he is only one among the guests at the banquet of life. If the dark days are many, so are the bright, and the wise man enjoys or endures each as it comes.

Many people would criticize Pindar's view of life as earthy, and find fault with a poet who seems to place man, not a little lower than the angels, but rather a little higher than the brutes. Yet no one could call Pindar sordid, for he has the Greek gift, to repeat a phrase, of spiritualizing material things. The joys of feasting, for instance, play some considerable part in him (they were, then as now, the sequel to athletic contests). But they are viewed in a glory of ideal light, not as the mere filling of the belly, but as *εὐφροσύνη*, 'cheerfulness,' as *ἱερὸν εὐζῴας ἄωτον*, 'the sacred blossom of joyous living.' English

[1] *Pyth.* 4. 287. [2] *Pyth.* 4. 294.

keeps traces of the same thought in phrases like 'good cheer' and 'good living', but they have long since sunk into synonyms for gluttony; in Pindar the good fellowship remains more than the good food, as we see in the description of the brilliant company of poets and statesmen at the table of Hiero. 'They celebrate the son of Kronos, when to the rich and happy hearth of Hiero they are come; for he wieldeth the sceptre of justice in Sicily of many flocks, culling the choice fruits of all kinds of excellence; and with the flower of music is he made splendid, even such strains as we sing blithely at the table of a friend.'[1]

No, it is not sordid, nor, if life is to be regarded from a purely human point of view, is it wrong. At any rate even the most aspiring idealists have at times their human moments, and there are few who will not find it refreshing after reading Carlyle or some other mystic prophet, till the head grows dizzy and numb with the thought of the mystery of life and of man wandering between two eternities, to take up Pindar and read, set out in a flaming glory of language, this sober, commonplace philosophy of the earth on which we live.

Probably the more we have said about Pindar, the more unfitted he has seemed to illustrate the view of Hellenism which the last chapter attempted to expound. There it was argued that the Greek united to his love of physical excellence a love of, and respect for, the things of the mind. And now, to illustrate this theory, we have hit upon a poet, who has the Greek truthfulness and the Greek love of personal beauty and of concrete things, but who has so far shown no sign of the Greek love of reason. Pindar, to judge from what we

[1] *Ol.* I. 8 f.

have seen of him, appears to have had a very commonplace intellect, and to have compensated for intellectual commonplaceness, as a man by a passion for athleticism, as a poet by a rich sense of beauty.

True, Pindar has not a first-class intellect; he has no speculative power at all; and though much of his poetry is sudden and dazzling like lightning, its flashes do not illuminate the depths of human nature. Yet Pindar is more philosophical than at first appears. He has an elaborate intellectual theory of life, is clearly very pleased with it, and loses no opportunity of preaching it. He may not be speculative in the sense in which Plato and the dramatists are speculative, but like all his race he felt the need for some rational account of things. Hence a philosophy. Its catchwords sound meaningless (so do Election, Reprobation, Justification by Works or by Grace); but that is only because we have outgrown the phraseology, and use clearer or ampler language to express our meaning. The meaning is modern, if not the words.

Let us take a fragment of this philosophy—Pindar's account of evil. Our misfortunes, he thinks, are due to three causes. First comes the nature of the universe, in which death and old age are inevitable, and some people are born weak or sickly; in which accidents happen that no one can foresee or avert. That is *Μοῖρα*, Fate, which sends evil not of our seeking and beyond our control. It is no use our complaining or rebelling against it. Death and old age have to be frankly accepted—as the tyrant of Syracuse had to accept them; *ἀσθενεῖ μὲν χρωτὶ βαίνων, ἀλλὰ μοιρίδιον ἦν*,[1] 'walking with sick body,

[1] *Pyth.* I. 55. (The words are used of Philoctetes, to whom Hiero is compared.)

yet so it was fated to be.' Then there are the evils which we bring on ourselves, by arrogance or vice or some other sin; and these are due to Ὕβρις, the Insolence of man. Finally there are the evils which cannot be put down to either of these causes, which are not of God, yet for which we can hardly blame ourselves. An upright, patriotic citizen is banished; his very virtue makes it impossible for him to live peaceably with his neighbours, and keeps him out of office and power. What is the malign influence which works against him but *Φθόνος*, Envy? *Μοῖρα*, *Ὕβρις*, *Φθόνος*, the three sources of our misfortunes; how could we improve on the definition, except by a change of words? What is the remedy for these evils? For illness? doctors, medicine: but there are many evils which they never cure. For *Ὕβρις*? repentance and amendment: but the evil done may be irreparable. For *Φθόνος*? it is difficult to find any remedy for that, except Pindar's general remedy for them all, *Χρόνος*, Time. A slow remedy and one sometimes overtaken by death; but is there any other which is effective? S. Paul, perhaps, might have said ὑπομονή, 'patient endurance'; but that is only putting the same idea in a profounder and more personal way.

So, after all, Pindar serves to illustrate our point; a commonplace intellect; interests which might well have crowded out intellectual things, and certainly do not encourage them; yet a complete philosophy; not profound, in some ways crude, but carefully thought out, elaborately rounded off, and perhaps not so very inadequate or contemptible.

Now let us pass to our second example.

To have been born in a town, situated in Asia, but where the settlers were Dorians and the prevailing influence

Ionian; before the age of twenty to have rebelled against the local tyrant, to have been exiled, to have returned, to have been driven out again by the 'intolerable criticism' of the citizens; then to have travelled northward as far as the Crimea, southward as far as Assouan, eastward as far as Susa, westward as far as Sicily; when forty, to have joined a new venture for founding an all-Greek colony in Italy; thence to have returned to Athens, while Pericles was at the height of his power—that was not a narrow life, nor a poor training for an historian. It is the life of Herodotus.

What inspired him to write his history?

Not the motives which inspired Gardiner and Acton, and inspire the better historians of our own day. Not the instinct, half conscious, half mechanical, to learn what really happened, to rinse from their baser setting scanty grains of genuine truth, to postpone to that the picturesque, the interesting, the profitable, the prudent. Herodotus had, as we shall see, a peculiar veracity of his own; but it was not the veracity of a scientific historian. Otherwise there would have been fewer miracles in his history: and we should have missed that conversation (whose genuineness his contemporaries questioned, but he himself with amazing mendacity affirms,) in which Darius and two eminent Persians debate at Babylon on the merits of democracy, oligarchy, and tyranny, in set speeches and with sentiments entirely Greek.[1] Herodotus does not belong to the modern school.

Yet his motives were not those of historians like Livy or like Macaulay. He did not write to glorify a great faction or a great people or great principles or a great man: or if he did, if the triumph of Greece over Persia was his

[1] 3. 80 f.

real inspiration, he wrote in a different spirit from the historians whom we have just named. He is not a mere panegyrist or an apologist: he does not speak of his own people as Livy speaks of the Romans, or Macaulay of the Whigs, or Carlyle of Cromwell. He does not speak of the Persians as Livy speaks of Carthage or Macaulay of the Tories, or Carlyle of the Cavaliers. He is not a lawyer, briefed to elicit the virtues of one side and the vices of the other. He quotes with evident enjoyment Cyrus's definition of a Greek market-place, as 'a place set apart for people to go and cheat each other on oath'. Though Persia was the enemy of Greece, he calls attention to the Persian virtues. 'Their valour, their simplicity and hardiness, their love of truth, their devoted loyalty to their princes, their wise customs and laws, are spoken of with a sincerity and strength of admiration which strongly marks his superiority to the narrow spirit of national prejudice. . . . The personal prowess of the Persians is declared to be not a whit inferior to that of the Greeks, and constant apologies are made for their defeats, which are ascribed to deficiencies in their arms, equipment, and discipline.' It is the same with his own people. He admires Athens beyond any state: yet he frequently criticizes her, pointing out, for example, the Spartans' superiority in courage. He dislikes Corinth and Boeotia, yet he calls attention to the bravery of the latter and to various excellences of the former. His verdict on the Greek world, so full of jealousy and detraction, has a tranquil impartiality. 'So much I know, that if all people were to deposit their private misdoings in public and try to make an exchange with their neighbours, when they had examined their neighbours' iniquities, they would all of them be thankful to carry home again those

with which they came.' And he concludes with a characteristic description of his own practice. 'For myself, I am bound to report all that is said: but I am not bound to believe it all.'[1]

The little treatise of Plutarch, *On the Malignity of Herodotus*, is an interesting testimony to this candour. Plutarch took the view that the Greeks of the great age were incapable of wrong, and rated the historian for 'needlessly describing evil actions'. 'How malignant of Herodotus,' he thinks, 'to say that the Delphic oracle was bribed, that a party in Athens tried to betray the city after Marathon, that the Persians were worse armed than the Spartans at Plataea ('if so, what remains great and glorious to Greece in those battles'). How odious is his habit, after relating something to the credit of a man, of mentioning some weakness or vice; as in the case of Ameinocles the Magnesian, of whom he says that he killed his son: it is better to leave such details out.'[2] An odd criticism, but one which is based on fact. There are many characters in Herodotus whom we like, but none of them are heroes; and I am inclined to think that there is no one, except perhaps Aristides, whom we can wholeheartedly respect. Perhaps that is not entirely the fault of Herodotus: still it is true that his was not the style of those text-books of our childhood from which we learnt that the English arms never suffered a reverse except at Fontenoy, Saratoga, and Yorktown. He is not a scientific historian: he is not a conscientiously merciless realist:

[1] Hdt. 1. 153 (an agora): quotation from Rawlinson, *Herodotus*, 1. 80: see the whole passage from p. 76 for references. Hdt. 7. 152.

[2] Except for the words in brackets (*de malign.* 874), this is not a verbal quotation, though it represents the sentiments and employs the instances of Plutarch: for Ameinocles see Hdt. 7. 190.

but with the genuine Greek instinct of directness he took men and things as nature made them. And so as an historian his place is not with Livy, Froude, Carlyle, and their like.

Why, then, did he write his history?

He wrote it because he kept to manhood a gift which is original in us all. For Herodotus is exactly what a man would be who grew up and preserved unimpaired the naïve curiosity with which he was born. Solon had the same curiosity—it made him travel θεωρίης ἕνεκα, 'to see the world:' and it made Herodotus travel too, and leave in writing what he saw. Θῶμα—'Wonder'—he calls the quality, and in some sense or other the word is continually on his lips:—θῶμά μοι λέγεται γενέσθαι—θῶμα μυρίον—πλεῖστα θώματα ἔχει—θωμάζω τὸ αἴτιον.

Fortunate Egyptian priests, who expounded to him the ways of their country, and watched him absorb it all from the three hundred and thirty sovereigns of Egypt down to the bird that picks the crocodile's teeth! He took down every detail, small or great, with the impartial interest of a child. You can learn from him that Egyptian cats jump into the fire, that the Persians dislike white pigeons, that the priestess of Athene at Pedasus has twice grown a large beard, that the Massagetae eat their parents, that the Danube islanders get drunk on smells: he tells us why Scythian cattle have no horns, what is the relative hardness of an Egyptian and a Persian skull, what is the size of the waterworks at Samos, how Psammetichus learnt that the first men on the earth were Phrygians, how the walls of Babylon were built, how the trench was dug through Athos, how the Adyrmachidae treat fleas, how the lake-dwellers prevent their children falling into the

water.[1] And all this springs from a history of the relations of Greece with the East, which its writer follows through sinuous meanders of infinite digression, using it as a frame for the history of all the ways of all mankind of which he knew or had been told.

And how much of something more interesting than archaeological or ethnological fact, how much of human nature, passes in review as we read him. For the Wonder of Herodotus goes far beyond the curiosity of Mandeville or Marco Polo, and is nearer the imaginative sympathy of a great novelist. He loves to watch and depict human nature. He loves the personal element in history. And because he is unfettered by desire for immediate relevance, he lets this draw him wherever it is to be found; so that in his pages, statesmen, grooms, doctors, nurses, peasants, gods, thieves, jostle one another. Now a king speaks, now a philosopher, now a café loafer. We see Syloson in the great square of Memphis, strutting in his scarlet cloak, we hear the self-complacency of the fisherman who was asked to dinner with the tyrant of Samos,[2] and the retort of the mother of Ariston to the man who said that a mule driver was the father of her children. Children, too, who are generally excluded from history, delight the broad humanity of Herodotus, and are continually to be met in his pages.[3] In general he is more interested in human beings, their passions and emotions, than in the 'forces' and 'movements' of the modern historian. 'The Phocaeans sunk a lump of iron and swore they would

[1] 2. 66; 1. 138; 8. 104; 1. 216; 1. 202; 4. 29; 3. 12; 3. 60; 2. 2; 1. 179; 7. 23; 4. 168; 5. 16.

[2] 3. 42 (μέγα ποιεύμενος); 3. 139 (Syloson); 6. 69 (the wife of Ariston).

[3] e.g. 1. 111 f.; 2. 1; 3. 48; 5. 51. 92.

not return to their city till it floated. But as they were setting out for Cyrnus, longing and sorrow for their home and for the ways of the land overcame more than half of them, and they broke their oath and sailed back to Phocaea.'[1] The writer of these words was more than a mere historian. He was a man whose width of human sympathy, and interest in human things places him nearer to Shakespeare than to Thucydides.

The real genius of Herodotus lies in this quick imaginative intellect—not in his religious or ethical views. Of his religion it is difficult to speak, for he belongs to an age of transition, and exhibits at once the old superstitions and the new criticism. On the one hand, he fills his history with miracles, goes out of his way to express confidence in the oracles of Bakis, is shocked by any form of impiety, and believes that God envies and overthrows men for becoming powerful. On the other, he supposes that the gods owe their functions, shapes, and names to Homer and Hesiod, thinks that 'one man knows as much of them as another', and holds the dangerous doctrine that custom determines men's beliefs.[2] A generation later these lines might have taken him into agnosticism. But whatever his destination, he was not and could never have become a religious genius; he is not a spiritual man, and he is entirely wanting in that sense of a personal relation to God without which religion wanes as knowledge grows.

Equally little is he a great moralist. When a definite

[1] 1. 165.

[2] 8. 77 (Bakis); 1. 32 (enviousness of God: so 3. 40; 7. 10); 2. 53 (Homer and theology); 2. 3; 3. 38 (νόμος). The 'enviousness' of the Herodotean gods is not to be confused with the 'jealousy' of Jehovah: it is mere unmixed envy.

issue is presented to him, he takes the side of the angels; he definitely condemns certain enormities: he often implies, without openly stating, condemnation. On the other hand, he relates horrible things in the same spirit in which we read of murders, sometimes with a pleased interest in their strangeness, sometimes with a not unagreeable thrill of horror, but in either case without any realization of the misery and degradation they imply. Here is his account of a particularly atrocious custom, the Scythian custom of blinding slaves. 'The Scythians blind all their slaves because of the milk which they drink: and what they do is this.' (Then he describes a method of inflating the mares to make them give more milk.) 'When the milk has been obtained, they pour it into hollow wooden vessels, station the blind slaves by them and churn the milk. The part which sets, they drain off and esteem most: what sinks to the bottom, they consider of less value. That is why the Scythians blind every one they capture: for they do not cultivate the ground, but are nomads.' That is a type of many stories in Herodotus. Herodotus has come upon some odd customs; he is extremely interested in a curious way the Scythians have of treating their slaves, in a curious way they have of making their mares give more milk. If we could ask him whether he approved of treating slaves thus, he would of course have answered no. But he is so absorbed in the way in which the Scythians get their milk, what they do with it, and what they think of it, that he forgets to be angry or disgusted about the slaves. Hence a string of details quite irrelevant to the main horror, and which indicate that Herodotus is full of intellectual curiosity, but temporarily indifferent to the moral aspects of the story. In that he is a true devotee of

θεωρία. It is almost impossible to unite the impartiality of a genuine critical temperament with moral fervour. The one will be lukewarm or the other biased. If a man is Renan or Goethe, he will not be Carlyle or Ruskin.[1]

Now let us glance at the relation of all this to the Greek genius.

We saw in the preceding chapter that intellectual interest is one side of humanism. Here Herodotus is a better representative of the Greeks than Pindar, whose mental joints work somewhat stiffly; and for that reason we have occupied ourselves with him. He was never trained to criticize or speculate; his criticism and speculation are the spontaneous work of an untutored brain. But he is the rough material of a Socrates or a Plato, and with such a stock to draw from we are not surprised at the later intellectual achievements of Greece.

True, the ordinary man was not Herodotus. But no one can read the history without realizing that it tells of a people amazingly quick-witted itself and delighting in the quick wit of others, a people, as Herodotus says, 'distinguished of old from the barbarians for its greater cleverness and greater freedom from silly simplicity.'[2] There are the quaint sayings and ready retorts—*εὖ εἰρημένα, ἔπη ἀστεῖα.* There is the infinite fertility of expedient

[1] Hdt. 4. 2. It is, perhaps, possible to argue that all the while Herodotus is in a state of suppressed moral indignation. Every one must judge for himself whether that is the impression he leaves. On the difference between the moral and intellectual temperament, see Mazzini's essays on Renan, and on Goethe and Byron.

[2] 1. 60.

and trick which furnished Herodotus with so many of his tales. There is the gusto with which these things are narrated. And, greatest testimony of all, there is the sight of the Greek already seizing the position which he was to hold for so many generations, under Seleucids, Ptolemies, Romans, Turks, already becoming the brain of the Nearer East. His oracles—it was an intellectual people surely that riddled and unriddled sayings so obscure—are consulted by Eastern potentates; his philosophers go travelling to their courts; his engineers bridge the Bosphorus for Darius; his doctors attend that monarch for sprained ankle; his exiles instigate and counsel Persia in the invasion of Greece. Their ready wit takes the Greeks everywhere and makes them everything. When Cambyses invaded Egypt, he both found Greeks in the opposing army and took them with him in his own: they had come, Herodotus says, 'in great quantities, some to trade, and some, too, *to see the country.*' Perhaps on that occasion some Persian or Egyptian courtier may have anticipated by six centuries Juvenal's hatred of this ubiquitous, insinuating race, and cursed in his own language the

Ingenium velox, audacia perdita

of Greece.[1]

As in intellectual power, so in religious and moral capacity, Herodotus is the general type of the Greek race. It is doubtless unfair to generalize from a single individual, but so much surely is borne out by history. Though the Greeks did much for theology, yet we should not look among them for the great religious teachers of mankind; though they did much for moral philosophy, their

[1] 1. 30 (Solon); 4. 87 (Bosphorus bridge); 3. 130 (Democedes); 3. 11 and 139 (Greeks in Egypt); Juvenal 3. 73.

achievement in the sphere of practical morals was the virtue of a few individuals, not the strenuous uplifting of a whole nation. They had the sympathetic temperament, which at the worst shows itself as quickness of mind, at the best as high imagination. The strength of this temperament is not the patient, stubborn edification of character. Its victories are won in literature and thought, and in brief moments of brilliant life. It made the Greeks quickly responsive to noble ideas, to sublime conceptions of God and man and the world. By moments they felt more intensely than any men the splendour of patriotism, the fascination of wisdom, the excellence of virtue; though, as such natures do, they were apt to lack persistence for the hard toil through which visions are wrought into realities. They had the poet's nature, which is sensitive to the atmosphere around it, and flushes to its colours as quickly as a cloud. So in their cities they created a rich life, and in their art, philosophy, and literature they were capable of high and beautiful conceptions. And the latter were permanent, but the former passed rapidly away.[1]

To suit our purposes we have dwelt on the points in which Herodotus is complementary to Pindar and have ignored his view of life. In spite of the differences between the two men, it is essentially the same as Pindar's. Herodotus was a democrat, Pindar an aristocrat: in the latter we see the cramped embryo of a speculative intellect, in the former one that is growing to manhood. But on things in general their opinions coincide. Like Pindar,

[1] I cannot help feeling that Maeandrius, 'the man who wanted to be just and found it impossible' (Hdt. 3. 146 f.), is a type of many Greeks.

Herodotus thinks the world an evil place, and almost justifies Goethe's statement that the lesson of Greek literature and art was that hell existed on this earth and in our present life.[1] Here is a conversation in which the speakers are Xerxes and Artabanus, but the sentiments are Greek. 'Our life is short, and yet there is no man so happy but he will have occasion often and often to wish that he was dead rather than alive. Misfortunes befall, illnesses harass us, and make life seem long, for all its brevity. Life is wretched, death is the most desirable refuge from it, and God shows his jealousy by giving us a taste of the sweetness of existence.'

These are gloomy words; yet round Herodotus, as round Pindar, there hang none of the depressing miasmata of modern pessimism; he faces this evil world with the common sense of a healthy man. 'Human life is as you say, Artabanus, but let us say no more about it, nor remember the evil days while the good are in our power.' The big battalions of fate are against us, but that is no reason for dropping arms from nerveless hands. 'If you are going, as each question arises, to take into account all possible chances, you will never do anything at all. It is better to be always courageous and come in for half the possible disasters, than to fear everything and never suffer anything at all. . . . The chances here are equally balanced. How can a man have certain knowledge? It is impossible for him. But those who act generally succeed, and those who take everything into consideration and turn back, generally do not.' Brave talk and excellent sense, these words, both in their gloom and their courage,

[1] *Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Schiller*, 927. Perhaps I have misrepresented Goethe by substituting literature and art for Homer and Polygnotus.

are typical of the Greek view of life, at least in the years before Chaeronea. They should warn us not to speak of Greek 'pessimism' without explaining what we mean by the word.[1]

For the Greeks, as we said before, kept both eyes open, and knew that life might give a qualified happiness to any one. And here again, though the happiness which Herodotus contemplates is less gilded than that of Pindar, it mixes, like Pindar's, with a vein of idealism those concrete and earthly qualities which we saw that the Greeks favoured. The historian has told us something about three men whom Greek opinion considered happy, one Athenian, two Argives. The Athenian had virtuous and good-looking sons, he saw his grandchildren grow to manhood, his city was prosperous, he fell in victorious battle for her, and the city gave him a public funeral. Because of all this Solon thought him the happiest man he knew. The Argives are Cleobis and Biton, who drew their mother in a carriage five miles to a festival, and 'having done this and *having been seen by the gathering* (few moderns would be unsentimental enough to add this detail), came to an excellent end. God showed in their case that it was better to die than to live. The Argive men surrounded them and congratulated them on their strength; the Argive women congratulated their mother on her children. Then she, delighted at what they had done *and at its celebrity* prayed God to give them the gift best for man. And after that prayer, when they had sacrificed and feasted, they lay down to rest in the temple, and never rose again. But the Argives made statues of them and set them up in Delphi, as the best of men.' Herodotus adds as further ingredients in their happiness

[1] Hdt. 7. 46. 47. 50.

that they had comfortable means and powerful physique, and that they had been victorious in the public games.[1]

Keats, whose untaught genius a century ago rejected the stilted Hellene of popular imagination, spoke in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn* of a

> Little town by river or sea shore
> Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,

and some such place was the home of Cleobis and Biton. Its citizens, as Herodotus shows them, are a homely, genial people—a German would call them *gemütlich*—too simple to be intellectualists or hedonists, too human to be materialists, prizing highly the common virtues and pieties, but not so idealistic as to undervalue good looks, 'comfortable means,' public funerals, and statues at Delphi; inclined to a dark view of the world, yet able to enjoy it, and living in kindly simplicity the happy life of the 'natural' man.

With this picture of them we may leave our sketch of the meaning of Greek humanism.

[1] Hdt. 1. 30. 31.

CHAPTER VI

THE NOTES OF SANITY AND MANYSIDEDNESS

HUMANISM did not disappear from the world with the Greeks, nor is it a philosophy peculiar to them. It is the shadow thrown by human nature, and, like a shadow, inseparable from it. Wherever body and brain exist, strength, beauty, and intellectual prowess have their worshippers; youth is enjoyed and old age dreaded. Men eat and drink, marry and are given in marriage, to-day, in the days of Noah, and in those of the Son of Man. In any society and under any religion, they seek the enjoyments and activities proper to human nature. A few ascetics cut themselves off completely from life. But most men have felt that common humanity is not inconsistent with their creed, and have been content to approach God through the circumstances of ordinary life, and by the instruments that lay ready to their hand. Thus humanism is no less present in our world than it was in that of Pericles, though in Greece it was cramped by fewer restrictions and worshipped with a more exclusive zeal.

We are all humanists in the sense that instinctively we enjoy human energies. But our own age is going beyond that. It is becoming exclusively humanist, and consciously adopting humanism as its creed of life. The word, or some derivative of it, is a favourite with both Comtism and Pragmatism; and all agnostics, whether they make a religion of humanity or not, are bound to

pay it the highest respect. For, not recognizing God in the world, nor admitting divine ordinances, they must form their ideas of what man should be from a consideration of the circumstances and possibilities of human nature. And so conscious humanism creeps in. Popular thinkers like Maeterlinck, Wells, and Galsworthy, start unaffectedly from human premises, and search in the human being himself for a revelation of what the human being should be. They do not ask what God requires of man; they are ceasing to ask what Duty requires of him. They simply inquire if he is true or false to what is best in himself, and judge him by that standard, condemning him for treason to his nature, praising him for loyalty to it. They are humanists and nothing more.

If this be true, the modern world should be swinging round with the slow set of the tide to that attitude and way of thought which Greece assumed so many centuries ago. And yet it is not so. However humanistic we may be, no one can feel that we have much Hellenism about us. Few Hellenists are more than poor copies of those splendid originals, mere cardboard imitations of leather. Somewhere between us and the Greeks a great gulf is fixed. Partly no doubt this is because the great mass of mankind are not yet humanists in their philosophy. But partly it is due to other reasons. The modern sense of beauty is, as we have seen, poor and limited in comparison with that of Greece, and this makes our whole life and literature uglier than that of Athens. Then, we are far more sentimental than the Greeks; tendrils of sentimentality still cling about those in whom its roots are dead, as ivy clings to a house long after its roots have been cut through; a certain falsity makes itself felt in the most merciless of our realists, a falsity quite alien to the naïve

and natural temper of the best Greek literature. But there is something more than this which makes us fall behind the Greeks. We have our humanist philosophers, but they hold a very mutilated and imperfect form of the creed. Their lives and their theory of human nature are narrow in a way in which Greek life and theory were not. There was in the Greeks a certain τελειότης which we do not possess; a certain width and completeness in their view of human nature, for want of which our literature is limited and provincial; a certain width and completeness in their conduct of life, for want of which our life is poor and starved. It is this weakness of modern humanism which the present chapter tries, very briefly, to analyse. The subject falls under two heads, literature and daily life; we must ask how our men of letters differ from Sophocles or Euripides, and how our clerks or prosperous artisans differ from the Periclean Athenian. We will take the first and less important question first.

In estimating the particular contributions of the nineteenth century to the literature of the world, there are three kinds of writing which no critic can ignore. In the first class are essays like *A Dissertation on Roast Pig*, *A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis*, *The Praise of Chimney-sweepers*, *On the Melancholy of Tailors*, all of them much or little ado about nothing. Lamb is the greatest writer of these, but he has many descendants, both legitimate and bastard. The second class has a wide sweep; it includes all literature which draws its emotions from that uncertain borderland whose mystery and horror trench on life: *Salome* and *Dorian Gray*, *Les Aveugles* and *Pelléas et Mélisande*, French Symbolistic poetry, *The Celtic Twilight* and most of Mr. Yeats's verse belong to it. In the third class are Flaubert and Sudermann abroad,

and Arnold Bennett and Galsworthy in England; they are distinguished by the possession of powerful intellects and by the impartial use they make of them; the cold and critical nature of their work is its strength and its weakness. These three schools defend themselves in different ways. But one of two principles underlies all their work. It is justified because it is Art; or it is justified because it is true. Art for Art's sake is a notorious maxim; we may add to it another--the real ground of the new drama's best work—Intellect for Intellect's sake. If these two maxims are pursued deeper, their roots unite.

Now in the best Greek literature we do not find Intellect for Intellect's sake. Aeschylus and his successors had high intellectual power; but no one could say that their central quality is a merciless analysis of fact. Nor again do we find in Greek literature that other class of writing to which we have alluded. Its great age at any rate shows no works like Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, or the poems of Mr. Yeats or Verlaine, or the charmingly written essays on nothing in particular which are associated with the names of Charles Lamb and Stevenson. The best Greek literature is neither eccentric nor pathological nor trifling; its writers do not lead us, like Mr. Yeats, into the bypaths of the human soul, to travel by dark and enchanted ways; nor, like Wilde, are they interested in its subtler maladies, living in the poisonous air of its sick-rooms, or in 'a delicate odour of decay';[1] nor yet, like Lamb, do they spend themselves on slight essays, where the charm lies in style and treatment, in the elegant chewing of what is after all only a cud of poor grass. There are no works of this kind till we come to the morbid love poems of Alexandria (which

[1] A phrase of Pater's.

might perhaps be set against *Salome*), and to the amiable essays of Lucian on flies and amber (which have something in common with the *Plea for Gas-lamps* and the *Dissertation on Roast Pig*). The earlier literature is barren of such children. Perhaps that should not be counted to it as a merit; there is sincerity and even genius in some at least of the works cited above, and they reflect real experiences. Still the fact remains; such subjects are not found in Greek literature before 326 B.C.

This is not a mere accident. It comes from the character of the writers and their audience. Those early Greeks were 'énergiques, frais, dispos'; they were not 'faibles, malades, maladifs'.[1] They were not blasés. They had not yet outgrown an interest in the simple, ordinary emotions of mankind, in what Wordsworth calls 'the human heart by which we live'. So they were neither aesthetes nor mystics nor symbolists. They drew from the common sources of humanity, at the point where the waters issue pure and fresh from the rock; and their subjects are ordinary, simple, human things.

Take Homer. The topics of his poetry are really very few; there are battles and games and councils and seafaring, cannibals and enchantresses and marvellous gardens, life in a Greek palace and in a Greek army and on a Greek country farm. But the underlying interests are only the broad interests which healthy men in any age have in common—little more indeed than a strong physical life and the activities which arise out of it and the intense and elemental feelings which centre round it, eating, drinking, fighting, adventure, marriage, friendship, faithful service; courage, generosity, loyalty; anger, cunning, fear. These are the oldest things in man, and

[1] Sainte-Beuve, *Qu'est-ce qu'un classique?* (*Causeries du Lundi*).

they are common to all men, for they are the original elements out of which we were made. And these things Homer cares for and describes, and he cares for and describes little else.

Two illustrations will bring out my point. There is a certain similarity between the stories of Homer's Nausicaa and Wilde's Salome. Both are girls; both are attracted by men of age unequal to their own. But Nausicaa's love is the elemental human passion; Salome's is an obscure disease. Contrast the words of the latter when she receives the head of John (I will not quote them), with the naïve confession of Nausicaa to her companions. 'Listen, my white-armed maidens, and I will say somewhat. Erewhile this man seemed to me uncomely, but now he is like the gods that keep wide heaven. Would that such a one might be called my husband, dwelling here, and that it might please him here to abide.'[1] Or, again, observe in what a different spirit Homer and Wilde think of friendship. The following is from *Dorian Gray*. 'Talking to him was like playing on an exquisite violin. He answered to every touch and thrill of the bow. There is something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence. To project one's soul into some gracious form and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear one's own intellectual views echoed back to one with all the added music of passion and youth; to convey one's temperament into another as though it were a subtle fluid or a strange perfume: there was a real joy in that—perhaps the most satisfying joy left to us in an age so limited and vulgar as our own.' Now hear Homer: 'Achilles wept, remembering his dear comrade . . . turning him to this side and that, yearning for Patroklos' manhood and excellent valour,

[1] *Od.* 6. 239 f.

and all the toils he achieved with him and the woes he bare. As he thought thereon he shed big tears, now lying on his side, now on his back, now on his face; and then anon he would rise upon his feet, and roam wildly beside the beach of the salt sea.'[1] Homer is simple, central, human nature. Wilde is informed with the spirit which Pater saw in La Joconda, with 'strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions'; if he has beauty, it is a beauty into which 'the soul with all its maladies has passed'.

So much for Homer. Then take the tragedians. At first they seem to refute my statement, for they are occupied with problems that never occurred to the older poet. In the murders of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, in the adultery of Aegisthus and the marriage of Jocasta, Homer had only seen horrible and exciting stories. To the tragedians these suggest the problem of evil, the consequences of sin, the mystery of heredity. For Homer the fighting at Troy was a great game. For Aeschylus and Euripides it raised all the problems of war; it seemed the disorganization of society, the ruin of civilization, a cause of misery to the conquered, of cruelty and debasement to the conquerors. Human life had grown more complex since Homer's day, its difficulties and possibilities had multiplied, and literature faithfully reflects the change. But even so literature remains central and simple in its interests. The agonies and misfortunes of the heroes of tragedy may be more complex than the elemental passion of the Homeric Achilles; but they are agonies we all might conceivably have to suffer, misfortunes that might possibly befall ourselves. Bizarre vices are avoided. It is noticeable, when we remember how adulterous passions

[1] *Il.* 24. 3 f.

attract the modern playwright, that no extant Greek play except the *Hippolytus* has them for its central interest. There is no morbid pathology in Greek drama.

Let me illustrate my point from a play which seems to contradict this view. The legend of the *Oedipus Rex* is morbid. It is the story of Oedipus who, in ignorance, kills his father and marries his mother, Jocasta. Surely this cannot be called ordinary, central, broadly human; does it not rather rank with—or below—*Salome*? At first sight one would be tempted to say so. Yet the real interest of the play is not in the relations into which Oedipus is brought. It resides partly in the plot—most wonderful of plots—and in the intricate net of circumstance by which Oedipus is taken in his guilt; but mainly in the appeal to our moral sympathies made by the story and especially by the part which one of the sufferers plays. Jocasta, with a woman's quick intuition, realizes the shameful fact before her son; with natural weakness she tries to hush it up, and, this failing, flies from it by suicide. But Oedipus, on whom the truth breaks later, insists on hearing the story of his shame to its end; and then, after himself rehearsing the tale of his misery in calm and bitter words, resolves, unlike his wife, to bear his fate to its end, and goes forth a consecrated outcast into the solitudes of the hills. The appeal of the play is not pathological or even intellectual; it is the moral appeal to the most universal of our sympathies. We see the agony of a human being crushed under unspeakable misfortune; and we see him triumph over misfortune by strength of will. The universe falls in ruins about him and he confronts it undismayed. *L'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus faible de la nature. . . . Mais quand l'univers l'écraseroit, l'homme seroit encore plus noble que ce qui le tue.* And so

many people read the play, and get to the heart of what Sophocles meant by it, without ever quite presenting to themselves the exact nature of Oedipus' sin. They hardly realize that Sophocles is writing about incest. For the fact is that the poet has used the incest and the parricide simply to produce a sense of superhuman disaster, of unutterable sin; he has not analysed and dissected them for themselves, he has not treated them pathologically. Put the *Oedipus* by the side of *Salome* or *the Picture of Dorian Gray*, put it even by the side of Hugo von Hoffmannsthal's play on the same subject, *Oedipus und die Sphinx*, and the difference of the two methods of treatment is apparent. Sophocles would have no sooner written *Salome* than Pheidias would have sculptured the deformities of a hunchback.

This interest in the essential things of humanity is easy to understand. It is partly due to the fact on which we have already dwelt, that the Greeks were a younger people than we. They stood in the morning of the world, no foot had been before them to brush the dew from its common grass and flowers, and they took possession of it with a fresh delight. The bizarre, the unusual did not tempt them. It has been said of Maeterlinck that his whole aim is 'to show how mysterious life is': and of another symbolist that he sought 'the secret of things that is just beyond the most subtle words'. Such an aim, such a search was foreign to the Greek; the morbid pathology and the charming affectations of modern literature were equally alien from his naïve and natural mind.

But there is another reason for this quality. The Greek writers led a life very different from modern men of letters. Our own writers, born, bred, and condemned to live in the study, are stuffed from their early years with 'art'

and criticism, and they have the qualities which such a training develops. They are artistic and critical. They are artistic, and their work is perfect in form and taste. Or they are critical, and it shows an intellectual appreciation of the problems of life and an uncomfortable insight into character, though little warmth of sympathy or delight. But in either case the universe in which they live is narrow; for art is really less important than life and worthless when taken apart from it, nor does the world consist as wholly of problems, as in a study we are apt to believe. So it comes that the modern analyst's influence is as narrow as his range; the intellectuals read him, the Stage Society acts him, and the greater part of the world (whose life is not in these things) passes him by.

The great Greek writers were very different. Instead of being mere men of letters they led the lives of ordinary active men. Like Goethe or Scott or Byron or Milton, they mixed in the affairs of the world. Sophocles and Thucydides commanded fleets, Aeschylus had fought at Marathon, Socrates had served in the army and presided in the ecclesia, Herodotus was a great traveller, the comic poet Eupolis was killed in a sea fight, Protagoras drew up the constitution for the great Panhellenic colony of Pericles at Thurii, and the most famous sophists served as ambassadors and diplomats: even with writers of whom we have no such records, we may feel sure, owing to the peculiar nature of a Greek state, that they took some part in public life.[1] Such an

[1] Cp. 'It came upon me "come stella in Ciel", when, in the account of the taking of Amphipolis, Thucydides, ὃς καὶ ταῦτα ξυνέγραψεν, comes with seven ships to the rescue. Fancy old Hallam sticking to his gun at a Martello tower. This was the way to make men write well; and this was the way to make literature respectable. Oh, Alfred Tennyson, could you but have the luck to be put to such employment!' Fitzgerald, *Letters*, I. 233.

existence bred men not only with wide but also with ordinary interests, and with a healthy outlook on life; in fact it bred normal men; nature added genius, and so we get the literature which sane, normal men would, if they had genius, write. We do not get Art for Art's sake, for the writers' interests were not those of artists or littérateurs, but those of general humanity. We do not even get such innocent and partial forms of it as Lamb's essays. A Greek would have said of such things that they were very delightful, but fit rather for invalids or aged persons, not for robust men, brimful of life and capable of its intense activities; he would have sympathized with the saying of Carlyle about Lamb, that his genius was 'a genuine but essentially small and cockney thing'.[1] Nor do we get Intellect for Intellect's sake. These writers' interest in humanity was not that of a student or thinker, but living, so that they were kept from the cold, accurate, unfeeling analysis of characters and situations, which is common in the ablest dramatists of our own day. They knew, what we have forgotten, that a generous heart as well as a clear brain was necessary for the making of great literature. As their idea of a dramatist was not merely an artist, who constructed good plots, conceived tragic situations, and embodied the whole in beautiful verse, so it was not merely a profound thinker, who dissected character finely, studied the effect on it of circumstance, started problems, pricked and quickened his audiences' brains. The Greek writers were preoccupied with their plots, not for the artistic or intellectual, but for the human interest; concerned for the actual misfortunes of the hero, not merely attracted by their dramatic value. His triumphs and trials they did not

[1] *Life of Carlyle*, 2. 210. In speaking of Lamb I am, here as above, only thinking of the *Essays of Elia*.

so much see as feel. For they remembered that the figures that moved on the stage were reflections of the struggling humanity to which they themselves belonged, in whose weaknesses and sufferings they saw the image of their own, from whose errors they drew warning, from whose fortitude strength.

Here, then, is a fifth note of Hellenism. It is an interest in and generous sympathy with the ' general passions and thoughts and feelings of men '. It springs from a nature which maintains the balance of perfect health, and has only the tastes and pleasures of the healthy. If we think of its origin, we may call it ' sanity ' ; if we think of its effects, we may coin some such word as ' centrality ' to denote it. Because Greek literature has this quality, two things can be said of it. Firstly, since all ages live by the ' human heart ', Greek literature is never antiquated. It has never had its day, for its day is, so long as the earth is peopled with men. Secondly, it is never morbid ; it is a school of healthy thought and feeling ; in Plato's words, it is ' a wind wafting health from salubrious lands '.

Most of the features which have been spoken of above, as absent from the prime of Greek poetry, make their appearance later. Unfriendly critics saw Art for Art's sake in the lyrics of Euripides, and blamed him for sacrificing sense to sound. They found an unhealthy and morbid interest in his plays on the adulterous passions of Phaedra and Stheneboea. Certainly he is more critical and intellectual than his two predecessors. Aeschylus is notable for what the Germans call *Stimmungsbilder* ; his atmosphere is electric with tremendous forces. Sophocles is a master of dramatic situations. But Euripides is the student of character, the poet of problem plays. That

description is far from exhausting his powers, but there is something in the view which Aristophanes took of his genius—that he taught the Athenians 'to think, see, understand, suspect evil, question everything'.[1] 'To suspect evil'—that is one of the lessons which Shaw and Galsworthy are teaching modern England. And it must be remembered that Euripides is the first 'study-poet' of Greece. He led no armies, commanded no fleets, spoke in no assembly. He lived in his study the life of a recluse—his great caricaturist seized that point in him.[2] In Athens his library was famous, and tradition represented him as 'gloomy, unsmiling, averse to society'.[3]

A century later literature was delivered over to the 'study-poets'. Far away from Athens, under the shadow of Egyptian civilization, a monarch of foreign descent founded the first university of the world. He instituted the great library and museum of Alexandria; he built a common hall where the savants whom he endowed could dine, corridors where they could converse, a theatre where they could lecture. It was a university of professors without undergraduates, and thither the scholars and writers of Greece flocked, to show what poetry men of taste living in learned seclusion can produce. Interminable elegies on incestuous relations; the hymns of Callimachus, perfect in form and empty of matter; the nature poetry of Theocritus, destitute, amid all its beauty, of virility or real human interest—these were produced in a foreign country, amid learned men, under

[1] *Frogs*, 957.

[2] Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, 406–9. It is with the utmost difficulty that Dicaeopolis, who wishes to borrow some rags from Euripides, can get him out of his study—*οὐ σχολή*, Euripides says: 'I have no time.'

[3] Suidas.

the patronage of a despot, in an age when Greece itself was sick to death. Then and only then did literature finally divorce itself from living, and become a diversion, an occupation, an art. The poets are no longer Aeschylus or Pindar or Euripides, but men who (if we judged only from their works) had neither home life nor national life nor any of the natural activities of healthy men ; they had merely a fine taste in literature.

The last few pages may seem to have been a tilting, gratuitous and impertinent, at persons on whom the public has already set the seal of its approval. So they shall close by an extract which describes with entire fairness the origin of one of the most perfect works, which Art for Art's sake can claim to have inspired. It neither praises nor blames ; it can be taken to do either, and every one will take it according to his taste.

It was not till long after Christ's coming that Longus wrote his fairy story of two Greek children, who lived, in a state of impossible innocence, in the country near Mitylene. But his pastoral has all the qualities of Alexandrian literature, and the words with which M. Anatole France describes the spirit in which Longus wrote, might, with a few changes, be transferred to Theocritus and his friends. 'La Chloë du roman grec ne fut jamais une vraie bergère, et son Daphnis ne fut jamais un vrai chévrier. Le Grec subtil qui nous conta leur histoire ne se souciait point d'étables ni de boucs. Il n'avait souci que de poésie et d'amour. Et comme il voulait montrer, pour le plaisir des citadins, un amour sensuel et gracieux, il mit cet amour dans les champs où ses lecteurs n'allaient point, car c'étaient de vieux Byzantins blanchis au fond de leurs palais, au milieu de féroces mosaïques ou derrière le comptoir sur lequel ils avaient ramassé de grandes

richesses. Afin d'égayer ces vieillards mornes, le conteur leur montra deux beaux enfants. . . .'[1] Think as you read these words, how different in the circumstances of its production was the genuine literature of Greece, and if you care to read the pastoral of Longus, note how different is its spirit.

Here, then, is a point in which Greek differs from modern humanism. It took a more central view of humanity. And so its literature has not merely the charm of beauty, or the quaintness of a puppet show, or the queerness of a morbid dream, or the chilly interest of an intellectual problem, but, as in Shakespeare or Scott or Goethe, real men and women move before us in it, and life is presented, not as thought but as action, not as a spectacle but as a *δρᾶμα*, not as a fantasy or a problem play or a vision of beauty, but—as life. That is one reason why Greek writers are so far ahead of our own humanists.

All this is the concern of our men of letters, and does not touch those who are not novelists and dramatists and essayists. We must now attack the second part of our inquiry, turning from our men of letters to the ordinary citizen, from Maeterlinck and Galsworthy to John Doe and Richard Roe. We have seen how Greek humanism brought forth different points from our own in literature : we must now trace an analogous difference in common life and for the ordinary man.

The modern world recognizes and almost expects a divorce between different interests and occupations. It shuts the scholar into his study, the man of science in his laboratory, the merchant in his office ; it leaves the poet to his dreams, it reserves politics for a chosen few : it asks

[1] *Le Jardin d'Épicure.*

from its soldier and its sailor little beyond proficiency in their business and a love of sport. If any of these stray beyond their allotted province, it stares in wonder, often in disapproval. But to gain any idea of Greek life, we must reverse all our conceptions of what is natural and proper, and cease to think of each man as limited to a particular function in the commonwealth. We must fancy Browning and Tennyson fighting at the bombardment of Alexandria, as Aeschylus fought at Salamis, and as Thucydides commanded a fleet in Thrace. We must conceive of Mr. Chamberlain, after initiating the Boer War, as leading the English army in person—the fifth-century Athenians expected that a politician who advised an expedition, should himself carry it out. We must think of ourselves as all trooping off from our regular employment, four times a month or more, to discuss foreign policy and vote budgets and bills in parliament: as all going to a national theatre twice annually and sitting through whole days to watch the tragedies and comedies of a contemporary Shakespeare: we must expect to find, seated by us, at Westminster or in the theatre, our neighbours and fellow citizens, from the Prime Minister to our butcher or grocer; we must not grumble (whether we are Territorials or not) at being suddenly asked to put on uniform and go off to invade a foreign country. In short we must imagine a many-sided, many-coloured life, full of every kind of practical and intellectual interests. Then we shall get some idea of fifth-century Athens.

The instinct of manysidedness was as deeply rooted as any in the Greek character, and was early formulated as a philosophical idea. The first principle the Greek struck out to guide him through life was the saying *μηδὲν ἄγαν*, Nothing too much. It is a crude and negative principle:

no doubt the Greek hit upon it by roughly reasoning from the fate of men in too great prosperity whose hearts were lifted up to foolishness, men who went too far and came to a miserable end. But the maxim carries with it as its obverse and corollary, the precept to see life whole and on all its sides.

Indeed the same conclusion results from the principle we found at the bottom of the Greek view of life, from humanism. You are a man: be a man. Man is a being with many faculties, they are there to be developed, and if you will be a perfect man, use them all. *Homo es: nihil humani a te alienum puta.* Give everything in you its share: give a share to religion, to war, to politics, to family life, to the intellect and to the body, to the state and to yourself. Give a share even to qualities which might seem dangerous.[1] Man is generally a sober and reasonable being; be generally sober and reasonable. But man has moments of exaltation and excitement; devise Dionysiac festivals to carry them off and let there be days when you are not ashamed to be excited and exalted and drunk. Man has bodily passions; allow them scope, though a moderate scope. Do not be ascetic, do not ignore human nature, do not maim it; give it play, yet such play that while no side of it is undeveloped, no side of it tyrannizes over, dwarfs, or interferes with the rest.

[1] The *Hippolytus* of Euripides is full of this feeling. The Nurse there recommends Phaedra to indulge her adulterous passion because

> A straight and perfect life is not for man
> (467, tr. Murray; see the whole speech, 433 f.)

and holds that

> 'Thorough' is no word of peace:
> 'Tis 'Naught-too-much' makes trouble cease,
> And many a wise man bows thereto.
> (261–2, tr. Murray.)

Needless to say, the sympathies of Euripides are not with the Nurse.

Clearly there are objections to such a way of life. It will produce a highly civilized people, good poets, good philosophers, good historians, bad generals, bad politicians, indifferent men of business. It is not consistent with efficiency, for efficiency demands specialization. Further, it has a profound moral danger. We have used the term manysidedness in a good sense. But Juvenal, whose keen eyes had noted this quality in the Greeks, uses it in a bad one, and saw only evil in the readiness with which they could assume any character and turn to any trade. He is describing the versatility of the Greek whom he knew in Rome.

> A Protean tribe, one knows not what to call,
> Which shifts to every form, and shines in all:
> Grammarian, painter, augur, rhetorician,
> Ropedancer, conjuror, fiddler, physician,
> All trades his own your hungry Greekling counts:
> And bid him mount the sky—the sky he mounts!
> No longer now the favourites of the stage
> Boast their exclusive power to charm the age;
> The happy art with them a nation shares,
> Greece is a theatre, where all are players.
> For lo! their patron smiles—they burst with mirth;
> He weeps—they droop, the saddest souls on earth;
> He calls for fire—they court the mantle's heat;
> 'Tis warm, he cries—and they dissolve in sweat.[1]

We can recognize in Juvenal's words the defect of the quality, that want of steadiness, want of character, which waits so often on brilliant and varied genius. The Roman indeed knew Greece in its later days, when changed political conditions had developed a fault which was in the blood, just as illness will bring out in human beings a latent constitutional taint. But Athens herself had felt the evil of it long ago, when Alcibiades was her citizen,

[1] *Sat.* 3. 74–8, 98–103 (tr. Gifford).

and Plato's description of what he calls the 'democratic man' is a profound analysis of that corruption of manysidedness which was the curse of Greece.

'It is the habit of his life to make no distinction between his pleasures, but to suffer himself to be led by the passing pleasure which chance throws in his way, and to turn to another when the first is satisfied—scorning none but fostering all alike. Hence he lives from day to day to the end, in the gratification of the casual appetite, now drinking himself drunk to the sound of music, and presently putting himself under training, sometimes idling and neglecting everything, and then living like a student of philosophy. Often he takes part in public affairs, and starting up, speaks and acts according to the impulse of the moment. Now he follows eagerly in the steps of certain great generals, because he covets their distinctions and anon he takes to trade, because he envies the successful trader. And there is no order or constraining rule in his life; but he calls this life of his pleasant, and liberal, and happy, and follows it out to the end.'[1] It is the very voice of Juvenal, five centuries before his time.

We started out to bless manysidedness: it may seem we have ended by cursing it. Certainly what we have said of it would not raise the Greeks in the opinion of an English man of business. Yet the quality is no slight or common one; nor is it without importance for our practice of life. Nothing is more remarkable than the richness of opportunity in Athens. There it would have been possible to find the same man, at different times, sitting at a cobbler's bench, listening to the *Bacchae*, voting in the Assembly, a worshipper in the temples, a soldier on campaign, a juror in the courts. We cannot indeed revive

[1] *Republic*, 561.

that Greek world in which poets were soldiers, and politicians generals, and every man a member of Parliament, nor should we wish to do so. But we can try to catch a portion of its spirit. This existence, whatever its faults may have been, had not the grinding specialism of the modern world. Here no one was absorbed by his trade or livelihood; but a man remained in the first place a human being, and exercised the gifts, and experienced the enjoyments, proper to human nature. The artisan did not become a machine, or the labourer a drudge. The soldier, the merchant, the man of letters did not slip into narrow professionalism. The historian derived his knowledge of politics and war from hours spent in the assembly and the camp. The poet and philosopher had been in personal touch with that human nature on which they moralized and wrote. And if at times this world had the defects of its qualities and developed characters which were everything by turns and nothing long, it fully compensated for these failures by its successes. Greek life always charms us by the brilliance of its many colours; but at its best they merge in one and become something like ' the white radiance of eternity '.

Having reached this point in our argument let us look back over the way we have come. Our original purpose was to seize the essential elements in Hellenism and set them down side by side, without asserting any necessary connexion between them. So we passed from the Greeks' Sense of Beauty to their Freedom, their Directness, their Humanism, their Manysidedness, their Sanity. As our argument advanced, it appeared that these were not isolated qualities, but were connected with, and had developed out of, each other. The Greek Sense of Beauty

does perhaps stand apart. But the others depend, like links of a chain, from the Greek Freedom as their outward or negative, and Greek Directness as the inward or positive, condition. Because their view of life was not dominated by theological or political tyranny, and because they looked at the world ' directly ', the Greeks became Humanists. For Man met their direct gaze as the obviously present, supremely real thing in the world. And because the Greeks were Humanists they were Manysided. For Man, when you look at him, clearly is a creature with many sides, and if you wish to do him justice you must treat him as such. And because they were Direct in their view of him they were also Sane. For if you look straight at Man, you see that he is at bottom not like the Cuchulain of Mr. Yeats, or the Salome of Wilde, but—a human being.

No passion is worse than the passion for a system, and perhaps it would have been better to leave these qualities of the Greek genius in splendid isolation, instead of trying to derive them from one source. But this much can be said, I think, for the quality I have called Directness. It is the one quality which every Greek has. Thucydides, Aristotle, Demosthenes, show no exceptional sense of beauty. Aristophanes, Herodotus, Homer, are not remarkable for moral fervour. But nearly every Greek has Directness. The most Hellenic Greeks have most of it: but all Greek writing has something of it. And more: it is really the secret of Greek literature. The beauty of that literature is simply the beauty of a representation of some event or emotion which has been felt with vivid exactness and pictured in a full clear light. Its weight and depth are simply the gifts of writers who have looked straight at life and put down exactly what they saw there, exactly as they saw it.

CHAPTER VII

SOME EXCEPTIONS. PLATO

WE have built a picturesque and roomy fold: it is hexagonal in shape, and the names of its walls are Beauty, Liberty, Directness, Humanism, Sanity, Manysidedness. We have driven our cattle inside it, and there they remain, to all appearance comfortably and securely penned. None seem to have been left outside, and though a few were rebellious, most went in without resistance or kicking. That is the convenience of dealing with dumb or dead creatures which cannot answer back; they might be less docile, if they had voices.

And no doubt, as we built up our notes of Hellenism, and squared and related and adjusted them, and then compelled the Greeks to come in, straggling strictly forbidden, the reader may have felt that this systematic grouping was too complete to be natural, and that Hellenism had some animals which did not properly belong to our flock. He was quite right if he thought so. For though the central fact in Hellenism and its most precious legacy to the world is the lucid, free, rational spirit which takes form now as *παρρησία*, now as humanism, now as directness, now as manysidedness, there is another spirit in it too, and if we had to criticize a writer like Matthew Arnold, who himself owed so much to Greece and said so much that was true about her, we should say that he fell short in his estimate of the Greek genius from supposing that it was always coolly rational and failing to notice that at times it was more. For if Greece showed men how to

trust their own nature, and lead a simply human life, how to look straight in the face of the world and read the beauty that met them on its surface, certain Greek writers preached a different lesson from this. In opposition to directness they taught us to look past the 'unimaginary and actual' qualities of things to secondary meanings and an inner symbolism. In opposition to liberty and humanism they taught us to mistrust our nature, to see in it weakness, helplessness, an incurable taint, to pass beyond humanity to communion with God, to live less for this world than for one to come.

At this independent current of thought we must now glance: briefly, for two reasons. Firstly, it is not the main stream of Hellenism, but subordinate. Secondly, we can get it from the great thinkers of Christianity in a more impressive form, while directness, humanism, and liberty can nowhere be found in such purity and completeness as in Greece. For the sake of vividness it will be convenient to expound this unhellenic spirit under the name of the one great extant writer who fully represents it on all its sides.

Perhaps to some people it may seem surprising that this writer is Plato. Rohde long ago showed clearly that the Platonic spirit was an alien phenomenon in Greece,[1] and other writers before had said as much: but except on grammatical and textual points, schoolboys are apt

[1] In his *Psyche*, on which is based what I say about Orphism and ideas of immortality, and Plato's 'otherworldliness'. To any one who did not know Plato, this chapter would afford a onesided idea of him, for I am trying, not to give an account of the man, but to illustrate certain phases in him. Of course, his extreme views—on the body, for instance—only appear in certain dialogues; and the *Symposium*, here cited for unhellenic qualities, is in many ways the most Hellenic work in Greek literature.

to read the classics more as admirers than as critics, and many people attain good classes in *Literae Humaniores* without discovering how deep is the gulf that lies between Plato and nearly all his peers. Still the gulf is there : and though in a thousand ways Plato is a Greek of the Greeks, in all that is most distinctive in his thought he is so far a heretic that if Hellenism had been a persecuting religion, it would have been bound to send him to the stake. Nietzsche, who justly pointed out that he was one of the earliest defaulters from Greek traditions, called him, in his ugly German way, *präexistent-christlich* : and, to return to my own classification, it will soon become clear that he is frequently not direct, that he is no admirer of freedom, and that he is not a genuine humanist. Let us take these three notes in order, and see where he innovates on them.

We saw in an earlier chapter that of whatever the Greek spoke, he tended to dwell on its ' unimaginary and actual qualities ' to ' take it at its surface value ', to ' see things naked ', to ' keep his feet on the earth ', to ' shrink from mysticism ', to be ' concrete and definite ', to ' keep his eye on the object ', in a word, to be ' direct '.

Now Plato is generally as direct as Homer or any of his nation, and that too in subjects where he might well be otherwise. The famous description of scenery in the *Phaedrus* is often quoted to illustrate the severe and unsentimental treatment of nature, characteristic of ancient writers :[1] and whatever may be thought of the feelings which led Plato to his views on an after-life, there is no doubt that when he takes us there, he is definite, concrete, and unmystical in his description of the future world to a far greater extent than, for instance, the writer of the *Apocalypse*. In the pictures of Cephalus

[1] *Phaedr.* 230.

with which the *Republic*, and of the house of Callias with which the *Protagoras* opens: above all, in the account of the death of Socrates, where instead of commenting or sentimentalizing, Plato relates the plain facts and leaves them to move our feelings—Plato is entirely direct. And so generally.

But there are times when he is very different, as all readers of the *Ion*, the *Symposium*, and the *Phaedrus* will remember. Take the first of these dialogues and note Plato's theory of poetry. Poets no doubt, at the best of times and in the most direct of hands, are mysterious people, but it is possible to treat them with very little mystery, as Wordsworth does in his *Poet's Epitaph*.

> The outward shows of sky and earth,
> Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
> And impulses of deeper birth
> Have come to him in solitude.
>
> In common things that round us lie
> Some random truths he can impart;—
> The harvest of a quiet eye
> That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

That is perfectly direct; these lines attribute to the poet powers which are indubitably his; no one could possibly deny that he does and is what Wordsworth says. But many people might have grave doubts of the truth of Plato's account of the poet as a 'light and winged and holy thing', in whom there is no poetry, till he has been inspired and is out of his senses, till God 'possesses' him and uses him as a mouthpiece.[1] Here, in their respective treatment of the same subject, Plato is mystical, Wordsworth is direct.

A still better instance is the *Phaedrus*. We saw in an

[1] *Ion*, 534.

earlier chapter that Greek literature as a whole, with one exception, treats love with as little mysticism as the subject allows, describing its obvious manifestations and effects, without any attempt to discover for them unapparent relations or to make them symbolic of profounder realities. The one exception was Plato. That potent and surprising emotion to which all humanity is liable he endeavoured to connect with mystic experiences in a former life, when the unborn human souls drove across heaven in the train of Zeus and other gods. There they caught a passing glimpse of the great Ideas, of essential beauty, essential justice, essential temperance, essential knowledge, and then falling to the earth were imprisoned in bodies and born as men. And so when a man meets beauty in the world, his soul, which is languishing in its prison-house, revives, and is fed and refreshed, and remembers once more the vision of ideal beauty which it saw before birth : this is love. Love, therefore, is the intermediary between God and man, the desire of the beautiful which is also the good, an earnest of the divine excellence which resides in heaven, simple and unalloyed.[1]

How infinitely far are we come from Sappho's commotion of spirit, as she sits and sees her lover : how far from Andromache's affection for the wise and brave husband of her girlhood : how far from the many-named goddess of Sophocles, who spurs men now to evil, now to good. Love left those writers on the earth, even though on a better or a wilder earth ; but it has lifted Plato away to heaven. We may agree with him, we may think that he has ennobled a passion and purged it of earthliness ; but we must not rank him, when he speaks thus, with Homer, or the lyric poets, or Euripides, or indeed with any of his

[1] *Phaedr.* 247–51.

race: his place is in the new world, with Dante and Browning and the poets of mystical and unearthly love. Whatever he is here, he is not direct.

So, too, in the question of liberty, Plato abandons the ideal of his race, or rather of that Ionian section of it to which he belonged. Pericles, as we saw, intended that in Athens a man should be able to think, say, and do what he wished. He entrusted the greatest interests to an unaided, unfenced humanity, in the simple faith that it is the nature of man to do right and walk straight. His citizens, he thought, had a spirit of awe, a thirst for fame, and a devotion to a country, so glorious that she could claim devotion. This was a secure guarantee for patriotism, a sufficient basis on which to build a polity.[1]

There was a time when Plato must have agreed with him, for freedom of thought was the maxim and practice of his master, Socrates. But when he turned to politics, he proposed to found his state on principles very different from those of Pericles. Indeed its chief features are borrowed from those regulations of Lycurgus which Pericles expressly rejects.

Think for a moment of the life which we should be leading if Plato had had his way. Born in a society where marriage was promiscuous, we should never know father or mother. Our early years would be spent in a state nursery, and from youth up our character scrutinized, till at manhood we were irrevocably fixed in one of the three Platonic castes, labouring, military, or governing. In the lowest and least honoured of these we might do what we would: in the other two we should live together 'like soldiers in a camp'. The use of gold and silver would,

[1] Thuc. ii. 37. 3; 40. 1; 43. 1.

according to Spartan precedent, be forbidden: private possessions would be illegal: our houses would be open to the world, our wives common property, our children as much and as little ours as those of our neighbours. For Plato insists on absolute communism, and as long as we owned anything, would not trust us to be unselfish.[1]

Such was Plato's plan for an ideal city; but realizing that on earth it was impracticable and could only exist in heaven as a pattern to which the lawgiver should longingly aspire, he sketched in his *Laws* a second-best state. Here he will allow us private property and families, though the syssitia are continued, gold and silver banished, personal wealth narrowly restricted, and a host of small regulations enforced. But there is a human possession of greater price than these purely material goods, and when he deals with it, Plato is no friend to clemency. In his state, whatever may be the case with his possessions, no man's mind is free, no man's soul is his own. Plato has decided what is the truth in morality and religion, and has embodied it in laws, from which no syllable shall pass. He has drawn up certain dogmas, theological and ethical, which are rigorously imposed on all citizens. 'The gods exist, they care for men, they cannot be propitiated by prayers or sacrifices.'[2] 'Virtue is always pleasant and vice always miserable, and you must not say that a wicked man can be happy nor a good man unhappy.'[3]

These are wide and on the whole reasonable views; but the net, though it has large meshes, still remains a net, and Plato is determined that no one shall escape from it. 'I should punish severely any one in the land who should dare to say that there are bad men who live pleasant lives; and there are many other matters about which I should

[1] *Republic*, 415–17. [2] *Laws*, 885. [3] Ibid. 662.

make my citizens speak in a manner different from the modern Cretan and Lacedaemonian, and I may say, indeed, from the world in general.'[1] At ten years of age the slavery begins with teaching the child poetry selected in order to inculcate the desired views, and certain sermons that Plato oddly proposes to attach to his laws. Plato knew well how easily the mind takes indelible impressions, and saw from the readiness with which the Athenian of his day believed the most improbable stories of mythology that 'the legislator can persuade the minds of the young of anything: so that he has only to reflect and find out what belief will be of the greatest public advantage, and then use all his efforts to make the whole community utter one and the same word in their songs and tales and discourses all their life long.'[2] Anything that can break down the intellectual tyranny thus established is carefully shunned. The poets are compelled to proclaim the creed, and are punished severely if they criticize it. Foreign travel—so often the solvent of national traditions—is forbidden before the age of forty, and to any one in a private capacity, though a few selected individuals are sent abroad with instructions to tell the youths on their return that the institutions of other states are inferior to their own.[3] At home, a body, ominously called the Nocturnal Council, which is carefully indoctrinated with the aims of the state, and primed with the arguments for the established theology, watches through its spies for any symptoms of heresy. And if, after all, some ardent spirit, some Greek Giordano Bruno, defies laws and traditions and poets, and slaking his thirst for knowledge at a muddied spring because the wells of truth are sealed, breaks into irreligion, and declares that there is no god, Plato is ready for him.

[1] *Laws*, 662. [2] Ibid. 663, 664. [3] 950.

Some one who hears the blasphemy shall lay information, and the man shall be committed for five years to the House of Reformation, cut off from all intercourse except with the Nocturnal Council ' for the improvement of his soul's health ' : when the time has passed, if he has not repented, the penalty is death. That is for the honest and virtuous unbeliever : for family prayers, held in a man's own house, and supposed to leave a loophole for heresy, other penalties are prescribed : for the wicked atheist immediate death and exposure beyond the borders.[1]

The actual ideas which Plato thus wished to propagate are noble, but his methods the world renounced for ever at the Reformation. Such powers are too likely to be used against the wrong persons—indeed, as Grote has argued, Socrates himself might well have been condemned to death under the laws which his pupil promulgated ; even where successful, they produce a plaster-of-Paris virtue, at once stift and brittle ; [2] and they soon lead the best-intentioned men into ambiguous positions and discreditable measures. Not many people will feel that Plato had his feet on a straight road, when they find him led to recommend to his lawgiver the use of ' noble falsehoods ', and contemplating that on occasions he will ' tell the young men useful lies for a good purpose '.[3] But, be that as it may, this compulsory discipline under which mankind is to be educated, policed, and, where necessary, hoaxed, into virtue, is infinitely removed from the liberty of which Thucydides and Pericles dreamed. It may be

[1] *Laws*, 907–10.

[2] An interesting modern example of this is the fate of the Paraguayan State, when the Jesuits, who had ruled it so successfully, were removed.

[3] *Republic*, 414 ; *Laws*, 663.

common sense, it may be 'the hard facts of life'; but it is the shattering of the Greek ideal.

Let us pass to the third point in which Plato departs from the canons of Hellenism as we conceived them. The ordinary Greek was a humanist, in the sense that, looking at man, he saw a creature at bottom and in its proper nature essentially good, with a body and soul equally excellent; looking at life, he made this being the measure of all things, turned to the earth for success or failure, and set no store by a world to come. The two views hang together, and Plato, who repudiated the first of them, was in the end driven to repudiate the second.

To start with, he broke up the splendid unity of uncorrupted body and soul which to the earlier Greeks was Man: he detected in its pure gold the stain of an alloy: he saw in its superficial aspect of radiant health a malignant cancer which flourished at the expense of the whole, and if unexcised would gradually destroy it: in fact he adopted the Hebrew creed of original sin.

The body, which counted for so much to the ordinary Greek, was the head of the evil.[1] True that Plato at times speaks of it in the genuine Greek spirit, goes into raptures over the young Charmides and Lysis which modern taste might feel mawkish, and calls a handsome face 'the expression of Divine Beauty'.[2] But elsewhere he holds very different language, and exhausts his vocabulary in metaphors of detestation. The body is the oyster-shell of our imprisonment, the fetter in which we are chained, the quack that cheats us. It wastes our time with outcries

[1] In the *Laws*, 896, he has the idea of two world-souls, one of which causes all evil, the other all good.

[2] *Phaedr.* 251.

for food, hampers us with diseases, betrays us to lusts, terrors, phantoms, distracts us into the quest for money, and thereby involves us in disputes, factions, and wars. 'Even if we are at leisure and betake ourselves to some speculation, the body is always breaking in upon us, causing turmoil and confusion in our inquiries, and so amazing us that we are prevented from seeing the truth.'

From such premises Plato passes to the inevitable conclusion of asceticism, that it is not possible, as the earlier Hellenism held, to take the body with its errors, fears, and lusts, convert them to noble objects, and raise out of weakness a temple to virtue. Instead of hopeless efforts to control the evil, we must fly from it, 'withdrawing from the body so far as the conditions of life allow,' dishonouring' it, mortifying it, and in short 'making life one long study for death'.[1] How strange would these ideas have sounded to Homer or Sophocles! how strange must the sober, earthly Aristotle have found them, who taught that men's happiness falls in their lifetime, that it is past for ever after death, and that wealth, good birth, good looks, and a reasonable length of life are indispensable to it![2]

With the body Plato had thrown over one article in the creed of Greece, and he soon found himself obliged to discard another. Humanism cannot satisfy those who have discovered a fatal flaw in human nature. If man is tied to something radically evil which is inseparable from him on earth, then his happiness must be placed elsewhere than here. If the body is a chain which in this present life continually chafes the soul, then our affections must be fixed on a future world in which we shall be released

[1] The above quotations are taken from *Phaedo*, 65–7; *Phaedr.* 250; *Republic*, 611.

[2] *Nic. Ethics*, I. 11.

from it. No one has put this more clearly than himself. 'If we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body—the soul in herself must behold things in themselves: and then we shall attain the wisdom which we desire and of which we say that we are lovers: not while we live, but after death: for if, while in company with the body, the soul cannot have pure knowledge, one of two things follows—either knowledge is not to be obtained at all, or, if at all, after death. For then, and not till then, the soul will be parted from the body and exist in herself alone.'[1]

This is indeed the gospel of otherworldliness, and it drives Plato to further conclusions which would have shocked his contemporaries even more. Avoid, he urged, political life. It has killed philosophy in contemporary Greece, so that the only philosophers left there are a few who have been kept in private life by ill health or who contemn and neglect the politics of the cities in which they are born.[2] Of these few remaining princes of philosophy he draws in another passage a picture which to our minds is both odious and contemptible, and which must have been even more so to a Greek. Conceive how the following words must have outraged the public sentiment of a city, where all citizens were members of parliament, and politics was an indispensable part of human life. 'They (the princes of philosophy) from youth up are unacquainted with the road to the market-place: they have no idea even where are the law courts or the houses of parliament or any other place of public assembly. They do not see or hear laws or decrees written or recited. They have not the faintest notion of the enthusiasm of caucuses for office, nor of their meetings and dinners. Of public failures and

[1] *Phaedo*, 66. [2] *Republic*, 496.

successes they have heard as little as of the number of pints contained in the ocean. And the philosopher is not even conscious of all this ignorance of his. He does not hold aloof to acquire a reputation; it is a genuine fact that only his body reposes and is at home in Athens; his mind looks on these topics as puny and valueless, and disregards them, and moves everywhere, in Pindar's words, meting the surfaces of the earth and the deeps beneath it, scanning the stars above the sky, everywhere inquiring into all the nature of each thing in its entirety that is, demeaning itself to nothing that lies at its feet.'[1]

In itself this passage is misleading, for Plato is speaking of contemporary Greek politics, which he held in contempt: no doubt, when his ideal city is founded, he will allow us, if we are philosophers, to rule her. Yet a radical aversion to politics underlies all his thought, founded on the feeling that the highest life was one of intellectual contemplation. He had no higher opinion of Miltiades or Pericles than of the statesmen of his own day, and in one passage he goes so far as to say that in a city composed 'entirely of good men, to avoid office would be as much an object of contention as to obtain office is at present'.[2]

Plato had despaired of the body, he had deserted the earth, and now he must find some alternative place of rest, or else relapse into helpless pessimism. Life would be a dismal paradox for the Platonic man, if imprisoned in a body which warped his nature, and planted in a world for whose climate he was unfit, he was perpetually to contemplate amid inconveniences and obstacles an ideal good which was removed from his reach. And so Plato has recourse to heaven. In those dialogues where he is most deeply moved, after bringing all the forces of dialectic to

[1] *Theaet.* 173. [2] *Republic*, 347.

support the cause of truth and justice, at the close he abandons reasoning, and portrays a future world where, if not in this, virtue and vice receive their dues. It is far more definite than the Homeric Hades, more definite even than the Heavenly Jerusalem of the *Apocalypse*, and Plato tells us its geography. He speaks of its hot and cold springs, its streams of fire and mud, its boiling lakes, its four great rivers, Oceanus, Styx, Pyriphlegethon, and Cocytus, its vast chasm, Tartarus, into which these flow, its stream of forgetfulness, its dark blue region, like lapis lazuli, wild and savage, its treeless, grassless wastes full of scorching heat. Here, after death, all men come for judgement, and thence pass to the fate which their sentence allots. The way leads near a tunnel, which bellows when a sinner approaches: wild, flaming men seize him, drag him through thorns, flog him, and fling him into Tartarus, whence he never emerges. Lesser offenders suffer a purgatorial torment of one year, and then are 'cast forth by the wave' into the Acherusian lake, where they call on the forgiveness of those whom they have wronged, and if they can obtain it are released from torment. But the holy are 'released from the body's prison and go to their pure home above'. That, too, Plato describes; its trees, and flowers, and fruit, its precious stones, its wonderful lights and colours, its temples in which men hear and see and hold converse with God himself.[1] Not, as Plato admits, that this description of the soul and its mansions is 'exactly true'. But inasmuch as the soul is shown to be immortal, a man of sense 'may venture to think, not improperly or unworthily, that something of the kind is true'.[2]

[1] The above details are taken from *Phaedo*, 110–14, and *Republic*, 615.
[2] *Phaedo*, 114; cp. *Gorgias*, 527.

Now we can see why Plato was called *präexistent-christlich*—a Christian born out of due time. He anticipates in point after point, if not the doctrines of the Catholic Church, yet principles which underlay her development, and important elements in her practice. His race had held that human nature was fundamentally good, and thought that knowledge and training would abolish wrong. Plato argued that there is an incurably evil element in man to which only death can put an end; as the Church argued that there is an incurably evil element in him, which can only be quenched by the Grace of God. Plato's race had held that physical beauty is among the highest objects of desire—Plato himself thought that the body interferes with the soul, often encrusts and embrutes it. He spoke of mortifying it here, and being happily rid of it hereafter; he taught men to shun its vanities and affections, to leave even politics and public life, to devote themselves to the contemplation of God and the saving of their souls; till his words might have been inscribed in the cells of Christian hermits, to justify and sustain them in the austere asceticism of their retirement from the world. Plato's race had concentrated their gaze on this earth, and had steeled themselves to face a hopeless Sheol hereafter. Plato told his disciples to look forward to a future life, to a judgement to come, to heaven, hell, or purgatory, to a scheme of punishments and rewards that followed a man's conduct in his time on earth. Plato's race had a generous confidence in human nature, and wished to strike the shackles off it, in the hope that it would of itself choose good and refuse evil. Plato invented for his countrymen a political system more rigid than that of the Middle Ages, a system of dogma as unalterable, and an Inquisition almost as severe. Original sin,

asceticism, ideas of a future life, strict authoritarianism—in all these Plato anticipated the mediaeval Church.

And not without close analogies in Christianity is the spirit which lies behind all these innovations—a general and complete mistrust of man. Plato is so strict with human nature, so anxious for its future, because he has a feeling that, except for a few favoured natures, we cannot be trusted to do our duty, unless temptation is removed out of our path and we are barricaded into virtue. 'Small, my dear Cleinias,' he says in the *Laws*, 'small, naturally scanty and the product of an ideal education, is the class of men who can steadily set their faces towards moderation when they are assailed by some need or desire. The mass of mankind is the exact opposite of this.'[1] Indeed, so far are human beings from wisdom or goodness, that they hate those who would help them to these virtues. Plato likens our race to men sitting in a cavern, bound with their backs to the light and fancying that the shadows on the wall before them are not shadows but real objects. But when the philosopher goes among them, trying to release and lead them out of the cavern into the sunlight, they are simply vexed with him, put him to death, and return to the darkness from which they came.[2]

Whether he is right in his view of human nature, is one of the great unsolved questions of the world, and not the least interest of his writings is that they raise it so clearly. Those who disagree with him would argue that his pessimism can be explained on purely natural grounds, by the history of the man and of the times in which he lived. He had seen the fall of Athens and the judicial murder of Socrates, his own essays in politics had been a failure, and he was sore and embittered. What wonder, when he

[1] *Laws*, 918. [2] *Republic*, 514–17.

looked at the Athenian democracy, which had ruined his country and put his master to death, that he should think men a hopeless breed? His belief, it might be maintained, was only the gloom of a disappointed nature, and had he lived a century earlier, he would have thought differently. But there are others who feel that time had brought home to Plato a truth which the youthful thinkers of his race had missed, and admire the insight which first suspected a fatal flaw in human nature: they hail in him the forerunner of S. Paul, with his opposition of flesh and spirit, of Pascal with his endless paradox of *grandeur* and *bassesse* meeting, unreconciled, in man. Our own age would probably decide against him. Things are well with it. It is making money fast; education and recreation are cheap, science has removed many causes of misery; savagery and revolution are rare; so at present we are riding high on a wave of humanism, and are optimistic about the nature of man, and the rapidity of the march on Paradise. Whether we are right is a point which every one must settle for himself, and which time will settle for us, if we can wait. It is enough here to notice that Plato raised the question and gave the same answer to it as Christianity.

We have hitherto spoken of Plato, as if he was the one great innovator in Hellenic belief, and perhaps we are justified in that, because he is the most eminent representative of the heretics. But in his theories of the lower world, he is a mouthpiece, not an originator. He is the prophet in literature of the Orphic worship, which, coming from Thrace in the sixth century, spoke of immortality and rebirth, of intimate union with God, of a heaven for the initiate and mud pools for the sinner, preaching asceticism and purity as a road to the former and, somewhat after the fashion of the Egyptian Book of the Dead,

giving its votaries elaborate instructions for their behaviour when they found themselves in the lower world.

Those who wish to know more of Orphism will find admirable summaries of its beliefs in Meyer's *Geschichte des Altertums* and in the work of Rohde quoted above; the *Nekyia* of Dieterich describe its relations to Christian eschatology, and Miss Harrison has an interesting, if rhapsodic, account of it in her *Prolegomena to Greek Religion*. Here we can do no more than briefly indicate the wideness of its influence by a reference to literature. Those who longed for some hopes of a future life such as the national theology was unable to give, and were, in the words of Euripides, 'sick of desire for an unknown bright thing beneath the earth,'[1] turned with relief to its promises; two great writers besides Plato were deeply touched by Orphism, and many others have allusions to it. Pindar tells how the wicked suffer troubles on which men cannot bear to look, in a land where 'sluggish streams of black night belch abroad endless darkness'; and tells, too, of sunny islands of deep red roses, where dead heroes race and wrestle and dance and

> Mix all odour to the gods
> On one far height in one far-shining fire.[2]

Pythagoras was given up to Orphism heart and soul. Its influence appears in the descent to Hades in the eleventh Odyssey. Its doctrine inspired the *Bacchae* of Euripides, and his lost play, the *Cretans*; the much mocked line,

> Who knows if life be death and death be life,

is clearly Orphic;[3] and, in his *Frogs*, the unspiritual Aristophanes has parodied an Orphic 'descent' into the lower world.

[1] *Hipp.* 194. [2] frs. 130, 129. *Ol.* 2. 61 f. [3] fr. 639.

Nor is Orphism the only gospel of otherworldliness in Greece; the Eleusinian mysteries gave similar teaching and attracted great numbers of worshippers. No doubt they were on a lower moral and spiritual level. The purity they required was ceremonial, and courtesans were admitted to their rites. The best authorities agree that there was no symbolism in their teaching, and that, instead of detaching their devotees from this world, they merely made them comfortable here and hereafter. 'The hints and emotions won from their pictures and representations did not deprive this earthly existence of its value for the enthusiastic hungerers after the Beyond, nor make them strangers to the living instincts of the old unbroken Hellenism.' [1] But none the less the Mysteries were a force which worked against humanism, for they turned men's minds from this life to a future one. And, even without them, we have, in Orphism alone, sufficient traces of otherworldliness in Greece. Are they enough to overthrow the view that the Greek genius was humanist?

Before answering this question we must repeat that every rule applying to human nature is bound to have exceptions, and that rules may yet be laid down. In this particular case, the exceptions, when we scrutinize them, are seen to be less serious than at first appears. Some, it may be argued, are due to foreign influence; the worships of Orpheus and Dionysus were in origin Thracian cults; the *Bacchae*, the most romantic of Greek plays, was written in Thrace, where the scenery and the wild native religion might well influence the sympathetic temperament of a poet. But in any case the exceptions are few, and the instances for the rule enormously exceed those against it. From first to last, the former run as an unbroken thread

[1] Rohde, *op. cit.* I. 300 (ed. 1902).

through Greek literature, the latter are intermittent and accidental. The many are humanists and direct, the few are not: and even these only diverge from the rule at moments, and in general conform to it. The New Comedy, Theocritus, Polybius, the Anthology, Lucian, show as much humanism and directness as Homer: in the main the same is true of Aristotle and the Alexandrians. For one romanticist piece of poetry in Euripides there are a thousand where he complies with national tradition.

Take two crucial instances, immortality and Orphism. Of extant Greek writers Pindar is the one unqualified believer in anything that can rightly be called a future life; though those who are acquainted with his poems may well question whether the belief made much difference to him. Plato is an ardent apostle: yet in places even he laughs at the idea of rewards and punishments after death,[1] and, if Socrates voices his views in the *Apology*, was at one time uncertain whether death led to immortality or to a dreamless sleep.[2] Outside these two writers, there prevails the normal Greek view, which was either ignorant of personal immortality or knew it only as an existence drained alike of vital delight and of active and tormenting pain. Absolute extinction or a shadowy life, these were the alternatives between which the rest of Greek literature, as we have it, wavers. This is true even of the successors of Plato. His school ignored their master's view, Epicurus openly rejected it; Aristotle is ambiguous on the subject; Stoicism either denied personal immortality or held that at best the soul could survive the body till the general conflagration; Chrysippus restricted this scanty possibility to the philosopher. Plato himself, in one of his most elaborate descriptions of the lower

[1] *Republic*, 363, 387. [2] *Apol.* 40.

world, lets fall a phrase, which shows how strange to the average educated Greek were the theories that he was about to disclose. 'Have you not learned,' he says to his friend Glaucon, 'that our soul is immortal?' And Glaucon (who is an ordinary young Athenian) 'looked at me and said in amazement—No, really, *I* have not.'[1] The exceptions to humanism are few; the rule prevails.

It is the same with Orphism (here we are on ground which we have just traversed). Except Plato and Pythagoras no Greek writer really gave himself up to it. Though it found its way into Homer it has so far failed to colour him, that by the side of the Orphic passage comes the famous description of Achilles, as a bloodless, unhappy ghost. It attracted Pindar, but Pindar absorbed nothing of its otherworldliness, its spirituality: anything more earthly than his general philosophy of life it would be difficult to find. Aeschylus and Sophocles allude to it, but themselves take the normal view. Euripides has more of it, but who would consider that Euripides was an Orphic at heart, or that the spirit of Greek literature as a whole is otherworldliness, asceticism, ceremonial purity, the desire for a personal union with God? It is one thing to toy with a belief, to be attracted by the beauty and romance of it, to indulge a brief sympathy, to set free for a moment one of the many selves bound up in us, to rhapsodize with the prophets of a creed which is alien from our inner temperament and ultimate conviction: it is another thing to believe.

What we have done with humanism we might also do with liberty, directness, and the other qualities which we have attributed to the Greeks. We might show that

[1] *Republic*, 608.

all of them have their exceptions, yet that the rule predominates. But our intention from the first was to speak of the essence of Hellenism, not of its by-products, and if we deal with these, we shall find ourselves carried far out of classical times, and forced to give sketchy and inadequate accounts of growths as late as Neoplatonism. So we will be content with having roughly indicated under each Note, where the exceptions to it may be looked for, and once more insist that directness, humanism, and freedom are the prime characteristics of the genius of Greece.

Yet while we insist on the pre-eminence of these qualities, let us not forget that Greece shows also the first beginnings of their opposites. Hers is the very chest of Pandora. Authoritarianism, mysticism, otherworldliness, romanticism, are lying ready for us at its bottom. She gives us the alkali with the acid ; with the poison (if we think it a poison) she gives us the antidote.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIFTH CENTURY AND AFTER

THE genius of the British people existed in its essence long before its greatest achievements. The qualities which have made us a trading, colonizing, ruling power were evident before we had a fleet or an empire. A contemporary of Shakespeare might have analysed and exhibited the character of our race in years when the industrial revolution had not been dreamed of, and the colonial dominions were represented by Virginia: even in our own day a writer might write a book on the British genius, without a mention of those great achievements, and yet perhaps miss nothing that was vital to his purpose. Something similar is true of the Greeks. The Greek genius was in existence before the greatest achievements of Hellenism, before the fifth century opened, before Pericles or Plato was born. It was alive when the Homeric poems were put together. The later Greeks added nothing to it. They did but exemplify it in richer combinations and fuller developments. If we understand it, we shall understand them. If we understand Homer and Hesiod, we shall understand Euripides and Aristotle—understand at least what is most excellent and eternal in them: just as, if we understand Drake and Cromwell we shall understand the British achievement in the last century.

This theory we have hitherto followed; seeking the general Greek genius, a spirit independent of time or place, a property common to all ages and persons

that are genuinely Hellenic; seeking notes or characteristics which are found alike in Homer and in Lucian, in Herodotus and in the late epigrammatists of Byzantium. Now we must go further: we must look beyond the essential qualities of Hellenism. We must fix our eyes on one particular development of it, which is so important that for the general public it has almost thrust aside what went before and after, and arrogated to itself the right to stand for Greece. No history of the English genius would really be complete if it ignored the nineteenth century: no history of the Greek genius is complete which forgets the form it took somewhere about 500 B.C.

On the south shore of the Latmian bay and looking across it to where the Maeander joins the sea, lies the town of Miletus. Here, about the opening of the seventh century, a Greek called Thales puzzled over the world around him and wondered what it really was. What lay behind the bay and hills and olive-trees and vines and white buildings of his home? He thought, and decided that everything in the last resort was water. Out of water all things were generated. It seems a strange notion to us. Yet Thales had grounds for it. Water, he had noticed, is everywhere and enters into everything. It lapped, a blue liquid, on the shores of his home; it fell, a white solid, in hail and snow on the hills; it blew across them, a transitory vapour, in wreaths of mist. It was in the sky over his head, and on rainy days fell and gave fertility to the soil of his fields. It appeared suddenly on the ground as dew, it welled up in springs, it ascended on sunny days in great shafts to the sky. It ran as blood through his own veins and as sap through the trunks of his olives; he could squeeze it out of their berries,

and as oil it fed the flame of his lamps. Surely this omnipresent thing was the element from which everything was made. Even legend sanctioned the belief, for were not Tethys and Oceanus called the parents of all things, and did not the gods swear by the waters of the Styx?[1]

A few years later came his townsman and pupil, Anaximander, who, thinking that there were four irreducible elements in the world, earth, air, fire, and water, felt that it was absurd to reduce them to water, and hit on the notion that the original source of all four was an Indefinite Something, which was neither earth, air, fire, nor water, but which was capable of becoming any of them; out of it, he thought, the world was formed.

The seventh century, with Thales for midwife, has given birth to a strange child. Hitherto Habit has been master of the world without a rival. Men have believed without doubt or question what authority prescribed. 'When the world was created, Marduk the Sungod defeated Tiamat, the Chaos out of whose womb all things came, and split her in half, to form the sky above, the earth beneath,' thought the Babylonian priests. 'When the world was created, Shu tore the goddess Nuit from the arms of Keb, and now she hangs above him and he is the earth lying beneath her,' thought the Egyptian. 'Our sacred books have recorded it, our priests declare it.' But now Thales and Anaximander are inquiring how the world is *really* composed, and instead of Tiamat and Nuit, find only Water or some strange Indefinite Element at work. Their own theory is not in itself much better than that of the Assyrian hierarchs. But their attitude to the question is new, and has in it the germs of infinite change

[1] Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 49; Aristotle, *Metaph.* A. 3. 383 b.

reaching to a day when their spiritual descendant, Democritus, will discover that sky and earth were formed in void space of atoms. Nor will the new spirit rest here. Learning their lesson in this school, other thinkers will turn to fields more important than cosmology. Taking the homely virtues, which old Greece had practised without thinking why, they will analyse patriotism, justice, courage, virtue, and many more, asking what these qualities are and why men should be patriotic, just, brave, good. They will set themselves a new task in all provinces of life—to rise above mere instinct and habit—to rebuild what is wise and right in them on the unshattered rock of reason, to have an account and a ground for what they do. So these naïve speculations of Thales are among the great events of human history. A new thing has come into the world, such as is not to be found in the ancient homes of civilization, neither in Jerusalem, nor in Babylon, nor in Egypt. The reign of use and wont is over; henceforth men are to base their life on reason. We are standing beside the cradle of newborn thought.

We have watched the obscure beginnings of philosophy, and now we must pass over nearly two centuries; remembering, however, that though we can take leaps, nature *nihil facit per saltum*, and that thought, which was germinating in Greece before Thales, is evident before the second half of the fifth century, even in poetry; evident in Pindar and highly developed in Aeschylus. Still, the years after 460 B.C. are the real Age of Reason. Before 460 thought was sporadic, occasional, uncertain of itself; after 460 it became popular, universal, systematic: and, therefore, if we wish not to follow the history of its development, but to see its essential spirit, we shall

turn to the age of Euripides, Socrates, Thucydides. We shall leave Herodotus with his mixture of scepticism and credulity, with his genuine desire to make history a *ἱστορία*, an 'inquiry', and his frequent failures to do so, with his perpetual portents, dreams, and divine interventions, with his apparitions of Pan, Helena, Astrobacchus, and others, with his theory that one dream does not, but that two, do, constitute an omen, with the horse that gave birth to a hare, and the olive-tree that grew a cubit in a day; and we shall turn to Thucydides, who says nothing about dreams or portents, and little about the gods, and who is so coldly scientific in his account of the plague. Thucydides was a younger contemporary of Herodotus, yet in reading him we are conscious of a change as of centuries. The wave of thought, which has drenched the Periclean Athenian, wetted the feet of his predecessor; but no more. Clearly it is in Athens that the real work was done, and its most momentous consequences educed. Ionian philosophers were the prospectors: but Athens made the roads and opened the country. Ionians conceived of Thought, Athens developed it. Thought began outside Attica, but without Attica it would have failed of its greatest effect. The Ionians had applied it to physics. They had worked at natural science, and had made a beginning with metaphysics and ethics. But they had not gone further. More—their speculations touched a small class only: their thinkers lived in the isolation of learning: the world went past their studies uninterested and unmoved. When Thought came to Athens, all this was changed. Natural science fell into the background, and the interest passed to problems of morality and politics. In them it developed apace; it had found a medium in which ferments work more rapidly. For

social life and individual conduct are the concern of every one, while natural science is the province of a few. In a moment all Athens was seething with this new and revolutionary culture. And further: from the hobby of a few Thought became the property of all, and there sprung up, what otherwise before our own times is unparalleled in history, a Thinking Nation.

To produce this spiritual transformation, which in its way is not less important than the Renaissance or the rise of Christianity, two things were needed—the occasion and the men. Both these were present in fifth-century Athens. There was the occasion. Firstly the victories of the Persian wars had brought a sense of elevation and expansion into national life. As at the Renaissance, and in the French Revolution, men's hearts and imaginations were raised above the level of ordinary things. New ambitions and activities came into life. Athens was in a susceptible, excited mood. At the same time, increase of trade brought wealth, and wealth brought emancipation from mean needs, and emancipation brought leisure, and leisure left men free for thought. Finally, a democracy was established, in which every citizen took a direct share in the government of his country. Politics became the most important business of life. This latter fact was the immediate cause of the coming of Thought.

English interest runs so much to practical life that it is not easy to imagine a nation which by temperament loved knowledge for its own sake, which did not slight such interests as academic, and which would flock to its public places day by day simply in the hope of seeing or hearing some new thing. Still, let us imagine such a state of affairs. Imagine further this nation as totally without what we call higher education. They

have some primary schools, where reading, writing, athletics, and music are taught. But they have no public schools and no universities. Great latent intellectual powers: but nothing to develop or satisfy them. Vast and perennial waters, but the human being has not yet come by who can tap them. Imagine also that a sudden political change comes about in their state, by which henceforward birth and wealth—except for their accidental advantages—counted as nothing. All citizens sit in parliament; every office from commander-in-chief to civil service clerk is open to talent; an aristocrat, a grocer, an artisan may equally become premier: he has only to persuade parliament to elect him. In such a state the first need is the gift of speech: an eloquent, plausible, convincing tongue. That is the one road to power. With it a man may achieve anything. Only, where can he learn the art of speaking, and, what is more important than speech, the art of knowing what to say? If we can conceive of a nation in this plight, we shall know what Athens was like after the Persian wars. Our imaginations will be helped if we think of the recent demand for education from our own labouring classes, who, like the Athenians, have suddenly been called to politics, and find themselves unequipped for the task. And perhaps in some of the tutorial classes now being held under the auspices of the Workers' Educational Association, we may see, in minds capable of knowledge and from which knowledge has been hitherto withheld, some image of the Greek ἔρως φιλοσοφίας, the passionate desire to know.

This was the occasion, and it immediately brought forth the men. With their names every student of the classics is acquainted; of their nature he is apt to have vague ideas. They were the central figures in fifth-

century Greece, though to-day their faces are scarcely distinguishable on its faded canvas. Their writings are lost, their names largely forgotten, and our knowledge of them is chiefly drawn from the works of their enemy and critic, Plato. They are the sophists.

It is not easy to translate the word 'sophist' into modern language. At first sight 'educational quack' seems the nearest equivalent. If a foreigner came to London and announced that he was a teacher of virtue, and a merchant of the goods of the soul, that he was openly practising what Shakespeare, Milton, and Byron practised in secret, that he was in brief an instructor of mankind, he would be dismissed as an impostor and a poor one. Yet according to Plato, Protagoras made professions equivalent to these.[1] And if from mere curiosity we went to our foreigner's lecture-room and heard him saying: 'about the gods I cannot know that they exist or that they do not exist: the obscurity of these matters and the shortness of human life are impediments to such knowledge;'[2] we might go further and accuse him of something more than quackery.

Yet on a nearer view it becomes difficult to think altogether unfavourably of the sophists. Undiluted imposture could hardly have brought educated Athens to their feet. Nor are the charges of immorality easy to sustain. There is nothing immoral in the profession of Protagoras that every day a pupil associated with him he would go home a better man, or in the promise of Gorgias to teach the highest and best of human things.[3] Prodicus was the author of the noble fable of the Choice

[1] Plato, *Protag.* 313, 316, 317.

[2] One of the few surviving sayings of Protagoras.

[3] Plato, *Protag.* 318; *Gorg.* 451.

of Heracles, and was welcomed in unintellectual Sparta for the wholesomeness of his teaching. If Protagoras declared his uncertainty of the existence of Gods, Gorgias and Prodicus are represented as praying to them. If some sophists were radicals, one at least defended Cimon against Pericles, old ways against new. No, the sophists were not revolutionary or radical, except in so far as all thought carries with it an element of unrest. If we need a modern parallel to them, we may say that they did for Greece what the schools of *literae humaniores* and modern history do for their students in Oxford ; or what agencies as various as university extension lectures, tutorial classes, Everyman's library, and other collections of good books, writers like Shaw, Wells, and Chesterton, try to do for England as a whole. And yet though there is something in these analogies, they give little idea of what the sophist was ; he had something of all these influences, yet he was more than any of them. He came nearest perhaps to a university teacher, glorified, extended, and brought into contact with practical life.

A hungry people cried to the sophists and they fed it with all manner of intellectual food. They wrote books for it on grammar, music, medicine, geometry, astronomy, tactics : they wrote on anything that could interest or instruct. But their main subject was the conduct of life. Go to them, and you might learn 'how to manage your home in the best way, and to be able to speak and act for the best in public life '.[1] We laugh at such an idea. Yet it was a brilliant and plausible one. Music and medicine were teachable, and a man who studied hard enough might learn to sing or heal. Why not extend the principle to life ? Surely there were rules for that, rules

[1] Plato, *Protag.* 318.

for managing men or for disciplining oneself. Why not ascertain them, and learn to become a good man and a great statesman as one might learn to become a skilful doctor or musician?

And so the young Athenian who wished to 'learn politics' came to Gorgias and Protagoras: and they taught him rhetoric—how to plead a cause and put a case, how to arrange his arguments in the best order and style: how to employ metaphors, figures, rhythms: how to master the arts of narration, proof, exhortation, eulogy, satire: how to excite or calm human passions, how to turn them to the speaker's uses. And further than that, because a man must know what to say as well as how to say it, they imparted ideas, arguments, precedents, instances, applicable to politics. This led them into wider fields. The mere theory of politics in the first place, the arguments for and against democracy or kingship, the commonplaces that were useful in any political discussion—the successful statesman must know all these. Then he must be acquainted with men, and with the considerations which appeal to them, he must sweep the endless field of human nature with a discerning eye, and be able to play on the vices, virtues, passions, prejudices of his audience. And that took him into moral philosophy, in which Protagoras had his treatises 'on the Virtues' and 'on Ambition'; and moral philosophy led to metaphysics, where Protagoras would discuss the theory of knowledge and the nature of existence. No knowledge was too minute or remote to be of service to one whose life was spent in governing men. Cicero—the greatest of all advocates—was only echoing the sophistic theory, when he demanded of his ideal orator a knowledge of dialectics, ethics, physics, law, history, and rhetoric: he is only describing

sophistic practice when he would train his orator by written composition, extempore speaking, paraphrasing poetry from memory, reading and criticizing literature, discussing topics from opposite sides, study of jurisprudence, political science, history.[1] The sophist's pupils were taken through all these subjects; so that, by the time their education was over, they had taken a glance at most things in heaven and earth, and, as far as a superficial education can make a man so, were qualified 'to manage their homes, and to speak and act for the best in politics'. That was the university education of an Athenian.

Let us make the acquaintance of a certain Greek, who came under the influence of the sophists and can show us what they did for those who could reject what was bad in their teaching and profit by what was valuable in it. He is the greatest pupil whom the sophists ever had, and his work, which we possess, may give us an idea of the atmosphere that they created in Athens. I mean Thucydides.

No one can read Herodotus and Thucydides side by side, and not be struck by the gulf which lies between the two historians. Herodotus is delightful, instructive, and, in his way, veracious: his eyes were open, he saw things worth seeing, and he can tell what he saw. But he teaches us more about human nature (which he understood well) than about history itself. On the other hand, in Thucydides we meet a really scientific historian, who brings everything to the test of truth. The miscellaneous credulity, the genial inconsequence, of Herodotus is no more. Facts are weighed and selected: causes are sought

[1] *De Oratore*, I. 148–59; *Orator*, 11–19.

for effects: the light of reason plays everywhere. Herodotus had a generous interest in humanity: Thucydides had also a critical intellect. Herodotus was a genius: Thucydides was an educated man besides. Where had he received his education?

He had received it from the sophists; and a certain trick which he has shows the kind of thing they taught. Continually there recur in his history passages like the following. 'Simple men generally make better citizens than the astute. For the latter desire to be thought wiser than the laws; they want to be always getting their own way in public discussions; they think that they can nowhere have a finer opportunity of displaying their intelligence, and their folly generally ends in the ruin of their country: whereas the others, mistrusting their own capacity, admit that the laws are wiser than themselves; and being impartial judges, not ambitious rivals, they hit the mark.'[1] Or again. 'In peace and prosperity both states and individuals are actuated by higher motives, because they do not fall under the dominion of imperious necessities: but war, which takes away the comfortable provision of daily life . . . tends to assimilate men's characters to their conditions.'[2] Whenever a politician speaks, thoughts like these are made to flow from his lips, though few things could be less plausible or appropriate than such abstract musings. They are rather the reflections of a philosopher. They deal with the psychology of human nature, and in particular of human nature in politics. Thucydides is always reflecting on these topics. He is always analysing political actions and situations. His history is a handbook of political theory in disguise. The theory of empire: what is the

[1] 3. 37. 3 f. [2] 3. 82. 2.

justification of it, how is it best acquired and preserved: why it involves expansion and what dangers expansion brings: what is the place of clemency and generosity in it: why it is safer to leave subjects free: what leads to rebellion; when rebellion is justified. The theory of the state: the question of the rights of the individual against it: why it is better to belong to a state than to remain selfishly isolated. The theory of politics in general: the effect of war on a people's temperament: the danger to political stability, of eloquent speakers, of education, of a critical spirit: the function of intelligence in a state—do clever or stupid men make the best citizens? the place of religious motives and of considerations of 'honour' in politics: the question of justice versus expediency in statecraft, in which, clearly after much rumination, Thucydides comes to the decided conclusion that the final criterion in these things is expediency and not justice: though like Burke he would hold that 'Magnanimity is not seldom the best policy'. Finally the theory of human nature: the effects on men of sudden disaster and sudden success; the psychology of crime (a very elaborate and acute study); the limits of the effectiveness of punishment: the influence on character of revenge, and of hope. All these and many more topics Thucydides treats or glances at. Often his reflections are crudely introduced, like the mannerisms of a clever youth who has suddenly discovered psychology, and learnt that human action masks a network of motives and purposes; and who is so pleased with the discovery that he can talk of little else. But the reflections themselves are generally profound. Read the extraordinary passage where he describes the effects of party spirit in his own day, tracing its dismal pedigree and hideous offspring,

and ask whether a more subtle, profound, and tragic piece of analysis was ever penned.[1]

Here, then, is a pupil from the school of the sophists—this is the sort of man they turned out—this is the atmosphere they generated. These are the discussions which we should have heard, if we had penetrated one of their lecture-rooms and got inside four walls with Protagoras and the young men, who were learning 'politics' and 'virtue' at two hundred pounds a course.[2] They were discussing methods and principles in politics, they were probing into the interior of the human being who is the rough material from which politics are made. 'This Athens; does she well to have an empire? And having an empire, how can she preserve it? These human voters: has prosperity debauched them, will war upset their balance? What is the secret of their nature, that we may know it and guide them?' After all they are the same subjects which Mr. Graham Wallas in one way,[3] Mr. Galsworthy in another, are treating in our own day.

Thales cast a seed into the ground. Ionian and Sicilian philosophers tended the plant which grew from it. The sophists transplanted it to Athens, where it was watered and planted out and grafted, till it spread into a mighty forest. That is the Natural History of Thought in Greece—and in the world. Now let us look in more detail at the trees of its wood.

[1] 3. 82 f. The topics mentioned above have been taken from the Mytilenaeans' speech at Sparta (3. 9 f.), Cleon's speech on the ethics of empire (3. 37 f.), the reply of Diodotus (ibid.), the speeches of Pericles (2. 60 f.), of Alcibiades (6. 16 f.).

[2] The fee of Evenus was 5 minas (Plato, *Apol.* 20).

[3] In *Human Nature in Politics*.

First is the growth of Criticism, of which we need say little more. Thucydides will stand as an example, and what we said of him may be taken as said of it. To analyse their neighbours' souls and their own, to weigh, test, suspect, probe, to spare no nerve because it was sensitive, to husband no forces because they were weak, to expose all things mercilessly to the dissecting-knife, and decide for ever what was diseased and sound—Athens began to do this. In doing it she created new forms of literature. In prose—the first history worthy of the etymology of the name, and the great stream of philosophic inquiry that flows down through Plato and Aristotle past Alexandria and Rome and Byzantium deep into the Middle Ages. In poetry something even greater—for the critical spirit, though alien from imaginative writing, and ultimately perhaps destructive of it, is like many poisons, a powerful tonic in small doses. Epic poetry, which is the telling of stories, lyric poetry, which is an outbreak of spontaneous feeling, gave way to a graver and more profound form. Their place was taken by the drama. It is the predominance of the drama which marks the poetry of the fifth century, and the essence of the drama is that it treats of moral and intellectual problems. These are the offshoots of the spirit of criticism which was the first growth of the fifth century.

The second growth was akin to the first—it is the spirit of Science. Criticism is a volatile and random thing, which flits hither and thither without any aim beyond its own activity—an intellectual Puck. It owes no allegiance and admits no obligations, but fights like a free-lance for the amusement of fighting, or, it may be, for the best pay. You cannot count on it: the sword which was once used in your service, criticism may turn

on its old master, or if the mood suits, on its own self. (And the fear of this recklessness made conservatives in Athens distrust the sophists, as in England they distrust Mr. Shaw to-day.) But take this irresponsible spirit and moralize it, give it an aim and an ideal, and you will behold it casual and arbitrary no longer, but chastened by a serious purpose and consecrated to a particular pursuit. Puck becomes Ariel, the most faithful, laborious, and trusted of ministers, and takes the livery of service, and practises his arts in the household of Truth. Criticism develops into Science.

Socrates was the means of this development in Athens. He learnt from the sophists, and was really a sophist himself. But he added moral genius to intellectual power. Where the sophists were superficial, he was thorough. They were teachers, working for money, watching for pupils, and paid by results. The pupils wanted their brains sharpened for practical life, and expected quick returns from education. Science does not flourish under such conditions, and the sophists' teaching tended to be shallow and shoddy: they had to humour the market and sell to demand. But Socrates took no money and courted no pupils. He talked to those who cared to talk to him, but he talked how and of what he liked. He worked under conditions favourable to Science. Not of course that we shall find in his Athens anything like modern Science. There are no elaborate systems of experiment and classification: no laboratories and test-tubes: none of the machinery of knowledge. Nor are there the achieved results of these, the masses of stored and labelled fact, the huge granaries of daily accumulating certainty from which nations can be fed. Such things begin with Aristotle, and even then are only a beginning.

But Socrates had something more important if less imposing than these—the spirit of Science.

Consider for a moment the man and his ways. He had the laboriousness, the patience of a man of science. 'I must tell you a tale of Socrates, while he was on the expedition' (says Alcibiades in the *Symposium*). 'One morning he was thinking about something which he could not resolve; he would not give it up, but continued thinking from early dawn to noon—there he stood fixed in thought; and at noon attention was drawn to him, and the rumour ran through the wondering crowd that Socrates had been standing and thinking about something ever since the break of day. At last in the evening after supper, some Ionians out of curiosity brought out their mats and slept in the open air that they might watch him and see whether he would stand all night. There he stood till the following morning; and with the return of light, he offered up a prayer to the sun and went his way.'[1]

This was in the trenches round Potidaea. Now listen to him in a friend's house at Athens. He is discussing justice. 'What,' he asks, 'is it?' 'Giving back to your neighbour what is his own,' replies some one. 'And would you give a sword back to a madman if it were his own, and he likely to do murder with it?' 'No.' 'Then we must look for some other definition.' 'Justice is to do harm to one's enemies and good to one's friends.' 'But if our enemy is a good man, is it just to injure him? surely not? You will have to give up that definition too.' And so on; definition after definition is raised and found wanting, and we end—probably in a fog. This happens

[1] Plato, *Sympos.* 220. The next passage is from the first book of the *Republic*.

in every dialogue. The discussions of Socrates lead to little in the way of conclusion; they are sceptical; they never reach more than a provisional truth; they are always ready to throw away results, to sacrifice a position that might seem to have been gained. Socrates is content to advance by slow degrees. He holds it more worthy to seek than to find, better never to reach his goal than to arrive at a wrong one.

This was his spirit through life, nor did it desert him in the hour of death. In the last conversation between Socrates and his friends, as they waited for the gaoler to bring the cup of hemlock, their talk turned on immortality. In that hour human weakness might well have claimed its due, and the teacher and his disciples, whose companionship was so soon to be broken, have spent their last moments in the indulgence of a tranquillizing hope. Some of the company were willing to do this; not so Socrates. These are his words. 'At this moment I am sensible that I have not the temper of a philosopher; like the vulgar, I am only a partisan. Now the partisan when he is engaged in a dispute, cares nothing about the rights of the question, but is anxious only to convince his hearers of his own assertions. And the difference between him and me at the present moment is merely this—that whereas he seeks to convince his hearers that what he says is true, I am rather trying to convince myself; to convince my hearers is a secondary matter with me. And do but see how much I gain by the argument. For if what I say is true, then I do well to be persuaded of the truth' (he had been maintaining the immortality of the soul); 'but if there be nothing after death, still, during the short time that remains, I will not distress my friends with lamentations, and my ignorance will not last, but

will die with me, and therefore no harm will be done. This is the state of mind, Simmias and Cebes, in which I approach the argument. And I would ask you to be thinking of the truth and not of Socrates; agree with me if I seem to be speaking the truth; or if not, withstand me with might and main, that I may not deceive you as well as myself in my enthusiasm, and, like the bee, leave my sting in you before I die. And now let us proceed.' [1]

Bishop Burnet writes of Sir Harry Vane that he belonged to the 'sect called "Seekers", as being satisfied with no form of opinion yet extant, but waiting for further discoveries'.[2] Socrates belonged to that sect too. It makes him irritating to read; most of us prefer decisive pronouncements, and find the vagueness of the Greek philosopher irritating. For the method of Socrates runs counter to human instinct, which calls for definite results, which clings to its inherited ideas and does not care to sacrifice them for such problematical gains. Yet this scepticism, this willingness to consider and reconsider till absolute certainty is reached, is the preliminary to real knowledge. For it means complete indifference to everything except truth.

Because Socrates was the first to understand and practise it, he marks an epoch in the world. If science had her cathedrals and stained glass lights, we might fancy an artist commemorating her lineage in a design analogous to a Jesse window. In the lowest panel, where religion enthrones the Jewish farmer, from whose loins sprang the tree of Christianity, Science might fairly place the Athenian, who is the spiritual father of her greatest sons. Nor, if mottoes and texts were needed, would it

[1] Plato, *Phaedo*, 91.

[2] Burnet's *History of his Own Times*.

be easy to surpass sayings, which, if not his, were inspired by him. 'I am one of those who are very willing to be refuted if I say anything which is not true, and very willing to refute any one else who says what is not true, and quite as ready to be refuted as to refute: for I hold that this is the greater gain of the two, just as the gain is greater of being cured of a very great evil than of curing another.'[1] And again. 'I pray God to grant that my words may endure, in so far as they have been spoken rightly; if unintentionally I have said anything wrong, I pray that he will impose on me the just punishment of him who errs; and the just punishment is that he should be set right.'[2] If Socrates was not a man of science himself, he knew the spirit by which science lives.

This, then, is the second growth in fifth-century Athens. The third growth is more difficult to describe. It would be misleading to call it a growth of morality. Perhaps we might say that it was a quickening of interest in morals. There was in Athens a movement very similar to one which we have seen in our own day. In modern Europe the attacks made by criticism upon the long unquestioned traditions of religion and conduct have filled the air with talk of these things. Ethics have passed out of the study of the philosopher, religion is professed beyond the pale of the churches. Novelists and playwrights turn preachers; men of science provide new creeds daily; journalists make copy out of them; publishers issue them in inexpensive manuals. Something analogous to this came about in the fifth century B.C. Men became profoundly interested in morality, as under the circumstances of the time they were bound to become. For everything was criticized at Athens, and morality itself did not

[1] Plato, *Gorgias*, 458. [2] Id. *Critias*, 106.

escape criticism. As Shaw or Wells attack our marriage laws, so the sophists picked holes in the old-fashioned ideals of the *Μαραθωνομάχαι*, and pressed them to find grounds for their virtues. Thus the problems of conduct were forced into men's minds.

This did not necessarily mean that men grew better. Thinking about morality is often a substitute for practising it, and seems by some law of our nature to effect, as Aristotle might have said, a purgation of virtue. Still there is a presumption that if men talk much about righteousness, they will practise it a little, and certainly some men in Athens tried to act what they preached, and to persuade their countrymen to do the same. Foremost in this was Socrates. Xenophon, in his bald way, tells how Socrates 'used always to talk about what related to man, and consider the meaning of piety, impiety, honour, dishonour, justice, injustice, moderation, madness, courage, cowardice; asking what do city and politician, government and governor connote, and reflecting on those topics, knowledge of which makes a man deserve the name of *καλὸς κἀγαθός*, ignorance of which, the name of slave.'[1] Plato, more picturesquely, makes his master himself proclaim his mission. 'While I have life and strength, I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting any one whom I meet and saying to him after my manner: You, my friend—a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens—are you not ashamed of heaping up the greatest amount of money and honour and reputation, and caring so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never heed or regard at all? And I shall repeat the same words to every one I meet, young and

[1] *Mem.* I. I. 16.

old, citizen and alien, but especially to the citizens, inasmuch as they are my brethren. For I know that this is the command of God; and I believe that no greater good has ever happened in the state than my service to the God. For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I am that gadfly which God has attached to the state, and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you.'[1]

The mission is that of a Hebrew prophet: Socrates will convince his people of sin. But there is something in his methods we do not find in Isaiah. Socrates did not fill Athens with denunciations of evil, nor thunder against a guilty people, nor strive nor cry, nor pace the streets of his home with the terse warning that in forty days Athens should be overthrown. Threats and terror were not in his method. Instead he quietly recommended to his hearers an old Greek proverb: 'Know thyself.' To know oneself, one's powers and limitations, to know how far that self is really satisfied by money or fame or power, to know the things which belong to its peace—that was his repeated advice. Argument, common sense, looking facts in the face—with this (he thought) the world could be healed. So day by day 'from the early morning'[2] he was to be found in the public walks or gymnasia, or market-place, 'asking and answering questions', in the simple faith that finally unreason is weaker than reason, prejudice than truth.

Here we have the wedding of thought with morality, of wisdom with virtue, which is so characteristic of Greece

[1] Plato, *Apol.* 30. [2] Xen. *Mem.* I. I. 10.

and yet of all its phenomena is perhaps the strangest to us. The English have a reasonable love of goodness, but it is not the love of which Euripides wrote:

> τᾷ Σοφίᾳ παρέδρους πέμπειν Ἔρωτας,
> παντοίας ἀρετᾶς ξυνεργούς,

> Strong loves of all godlike endeavour
> Whom wisdom hath throned on her throne.[1]

What a magnificent phrase, yet how alien from our ways of feeling! Note the three elements indissolubly interwoven—wisdom, virtue, love—virtue springing out of wisdom and by its beauty exciting passionate desire. Our virtue is not of this kind. It springs variously from conscientiousness, from reverence, from a Puritan instinct to mortify the flesh. But it is not 'seated by the side of wisdom'; or where it is so, as in men like J. S. Mill, there goes with it a certain uncomeliness, which is far from exciting the passionate love of which Euripides wrote. It is but 'a caput mortuum of piety with little of its loveliness though with most of its essentials'.[2] It moves us to φιλία, but not to ἔρως. Only perhaps in the age when English thought had shaken itself loose from Rome and was rebuilding its theology, rejoicing in the strength of newfound truth, do we find that reason was lovable because it led to virtue, and that virtue was right because it was reasonable, and beautiful both for its reasonableness and for itself. 'The end, then, of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may

[1] *Med.* 844 (tr. Murray). The words would make a good motto for a university.

[2] Stevenson, of Herbert Spencer, in *The Influence of Books* (*Art of Writing*).

the nearest, by possessing our souls of true virtue.' And again:

> How charming is divine philosophy!
> Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute,
> And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets.[1]

The true Greek spirit is in these extracts. But it has gone out both from our education and our philosophy: and until it returns, neither of them will reach the heights where it is their place to walk.

Here for a moment let us pause, and glance at a specimen of this fifth-century development, at a 'modern' man. Our example is not Socrates, who is unique almost to eccentricity. It is the writer of the Greek words which we have just quoted.

Consider the nominal beliefs of the society into which he was born, the beliefs which he inherited as his birth-right. Consider his Bible, the theology of legend. It taught him that there were many gods, male and female, and that only one of these had no illegitimate children; she had an altar on which human beings were sacrificed. Zeus seduced the wives and daughters of men, his consort consoled herself by tormenting these women and their children; Aphrodite punished excessive chastity, Artemis requited her by persecuting her favourites. The human heroes of this Bible were hardly more stainless, though they bore such names as Agamemnon, Helen, Menelaus, Odysseus, and had been glorified by the poets of his land. Helen, after running away from her husband with a stranger, had allowed thousands of men to kill each other for her through the wasting misery of a ten years' war. Agamemnon, to prosper his expedition for the recovery of

[1] Milton, *Letter on Education*, and *Comus*.

this woman, his brother's wanton wife, had cheated his own daughter into leaving home by declaring that he wished to marry her to Achilles, and then had sacrificed her to a goddess; he had stolen from his best ally a slave girl whom he coveted as a concubine, and by offending him had almost ruined his army; finally he had outraged his wife's feelings by bringing a second concubine home in his chariot.[1] Yet Homer had seen no weakness in these gods and men, but worshipped the one and praised the other in all good faith, honouring Zeus as 'highest of rulers' and Agamemnon as 'king of men'. Euripides found it difficult to follow him.

He found it equally difficult, with his acute, critical mind, to follow other stories which his predecessors had accepted. When Orestes killed his mother, Aeschylus believed that the place filled with women, snakes bound in their hair, who hunted the murderer, mewing at the smell of blood; and that these were seen by the bystanders. Before the critical gaze of Euripides such a story fell to pieces. True, that in the *Iphigeneia* Orestes supposes himself hunted by such creatures. But they are not brought on the stage, and nobody else sees or speaks of them. A rustic describes how he beheld Orestes combating something which he (Orestes) called Furies. But the rustic himself saw no such things, saw only Orestes doing execution on some cows, and calling the world to witness that he was slaying his enemies.[2] No doubt, like Ajax on a former occasion, he was for the moment out of his senses.

But knowing that men who murdered their mothers

[1] Cp. Eur. *El.* 1011–50, where Clytemnestra makes these points against Agamemnon and so excuses her own conduct.

[2] *I. T.* 285 f. The madness of Orestes is a purely natural thing in the three plays of Euripides in which it comes, *Electra*, *Orestes*, *I. T.* It is noticeable that in the *Choephoroe* the bystanders do not see the Furies, l. 1061.

were not visited by women with serpents in their hair, Euripides knew, too, that matricide has its punishment. He shows us what it is in his *Orestes*. When the play opens Orestes is lying on a bed, pale and thin, with foam on his lips and long hair in disorder, his sister watching him. He will not eat: he will not wash: he huddles closely in the blankets, and groans. At times he sees dog-faced things in the air menacing him, starts up, fancies he will shoot them, and goes through the motions of drawing a bow. The watchers hold him down in bed till the fit passes. Then he comes to himself and lies there—in a mood more trying to his nurse than the madness—helplessly crying. ἔμφρων δακρύει. Conceive the horror of it. This has been going on for five days.[1] So a child of the Age of Reason read the punishment of matricide. It was a nervous mental derangement. It was, in a worse form, the punishment of Lady Macbeth.

Take another instance. Legend told how Helen left her Greek husband to become the wife of Paris, and how the Greeks followed her to Troy, and took it, and how she became again the wife of Menelaus. An awkward story, if we care to criticize, and ask closely what sort of woman she could have been to act thus. Homer himself felt the difficulty, and his Helen admits her sin. She is κυνῶπις, shameless as a dog. But in general for Homer she is simply the δῖα γυναικῶν, the wonderful woman, with white arms and flowing dress, whose beauty makes even the Trojans think that she is worth a ten years' war. Euripides is more searching in his analysis of the nature of this wife who left home and daughter for a stranger. To him she is essentially the vain, selfish, luxurious woman, and he spares no pains to bring this out.

[1] *Or.* 34 f., 255 f.

The handsome face of Paris fascinated her, and his rich Eastern dress; even more trivial vanities won her heart—the gold collar round Paris's neck, his wide Eastern trousers. Her fancy was bewitched. And then Argos was a poor Greek town. Troy offered her the fabled treasures and luxurious delights of the East.

> Once free from Sparta, and there rolled
> The Tyrian glory, like broad streams of gold,
> To steep thine arms and splash the towers! How small,
> How cold that day was Menelaus' hall!

So she left her home. Arrived in Troy she showed herself the complete coquette, taunting Paris whenever the Greeks won a victory, and so teasing his love into life. She liked the elaborate courtesy, the prostrations and salutations of the East, which were so offensive and ridiculous to the Greek spirit. And when the end came and Troy was taken and Paris killed, she dressed herself splendidly—for vanity never failed—and went out to meet the Greeks. Returning to Argos, middle-aged now, she was the same: ἔστι δ' ἡ πάλαι γυνή. Her interest is in dress, in mirrors and fans: she has brought a Phrygian eunuch from Troy to wait on her, and her attendants are connoisseurs in perfumes and looking-glasses. Even when the decency of mourning requires her to cut her hair, she will not spoil her good looks, but pares off only the very tips of it. Such was Helen, seen by the Age of Reason.[1]

[1] *Troades*, 969–1032 (the translation quoted above is Professor Murray's); *Orestes*, 128, 1112, 1430; *Cyclops*, 182–5, are the passages from which the above details are taken. It is noticeable that Helen inherits her vanity from Clytemnestra (*Electra*, 1071), and bequeathes it to her daughter Hermione (*Andromache*, 147 f.). Euripides regards ἁβροσύνη as an hereditary trait of the family, *Orestes*, 349.

It is the same with the war of which Helen was the cause. To Homer war was splendid. His heroes had found in it their vocation, and its evil was outweighed by the magnificence of their valour and the number of men whom they were able to slay. Euripides thought otherwise, as the story of one of his plays will show.

A town has been taken : the men in it have been killed, and the women who are waiting to be shipped off into slavery tell their feelings and discuss their future. The characters who speak are carefully chosen for their unlikeness, so that we may see the scene through different eyes and in different lights. There are the common women, whose grief is a half-animal pain at the loss of creature comforts and the breaking up of their happy homes. There is the wife of the king of the city. She is an old woman, and her warm affections have burnt out, and her deeper human sympathies dried up, partly through old age, partly through the very pomp and state of royalty, till what she feels most is the bitterness of the loss of a kingdom, and the destruction of a dynasty. There is her daughter-in-law, whose happy married life has been broken through her husband's death, and is to be succeeded by existence as the slave concubine of his murderer's son. There is a prophetess who looks at the disaster with a wider view, as befits the servant of heaven. There is one of the victorious army, who is sorry for the conquered, but after all is only doing what his betters order, and who feels the self-complacency of a victor and is looking forward to seeing his home again. Such is the design of the *Troades*. Throughout, the scene is laid on the sea-shore, where the captive women are huddled in a corner near the tent assigned to them. In the distance we see the victors drawing lots for the prisoners, carrying

the spoil on board and preparing for departure. As the play opens with the wailing of the captives, so it closes with the sounding of the trumpet to call them to the Greek ships: the town sinks into the flames, and Troy is lost in dust and smoke.

There is not a gleam of light throughout: the play is hopeless to the end. The captives have lost husbands and children, they are about to be dragged into slavery and divided as the lot falls, their old life is at an end and there is no hope for them in the new. There are two notes of exultation in the play, only two, and these are characteristic. First is the joy of Cassandra that she is carrying with her to Greece destruction for her captor, Agamemnon. Second is the joy of Menelaus that at last he can punish his treacherous wife. For, even to the victors, victory brings no happiness. By the mouth of Cassandra Euripides expressly states that of the two the conquerors are less enviable than the conquered. A moment's revenge is the reward of Menelaus for ten years' fighting: and those who through these ten years had forfeited their home life, are returning to find, some, death, some, treachery, and all, change, awaiting them in Greece. Euripides had asked himself what war is, when you look at it *as it is*: and this is his answer.[1]

Voir clair dans ce qui est: so Stendhal defined the author's duty, and Euripides might have taken the words for his motto, for though there are many tendencies in his work, in essence it is an attempt to see things as they are.

To see Apollo as he was, the god who ordered Orestes to murder his mother, because she had murdered his

[1] Professor Murray (translation of the *Troades*) points out that this is the significance of the play.

father Agamemnon: who seduced a young girl and poisoned her whole life.[1]

To see the murder of Clytemnestra as it was: an act which did no good to Agamemnon and which he would have been the first to dissuade: a brutal survival of the *lex talionis* into days when law had taken the place of that primitive device.[2]

To see the madness of Orestes as it was: no visible haunting with snakes and scourges and pursuing Furies: but a horrible thing none the less, a natural disease, the outcome of conscience, wasting the body and troubling the brain: accompanied with morbid suspicions which come and go with the fits of madness: fed by and feeding the intense self-centred egoism which is an invariable feature of such states.

To see the great figures of Greek mythology as they are: Menelaus, not, as Homer shows him, a great conqueror and king, but a selfish, prudent, and cowardly man:[3] Helen, not simply divinely beautiful, as Homer shows her, but a vain, selfish, and false woman.

To see the Trojan war and its results, as they are: the horrid murderous sack of a great town—it holds in some of the plays of Euripides almost the place which the family curse has in the Aeschylean drama—of which the consequences cling to all who had part in it, and, taking various forms, haunt their houses, bringing misery even to the third and fourth generations.

But note that Euripides is a moralist as well as a critic. In this point also he is linked to Socrates and separated from Homer. Homer has a moral standard, but his

[1] In the *Electra* and the *Ion*.

[2] See Verrall's essay on the *Orestes* in *Four Plays of Euripides*.

[3] In the *Andromache* and *Orestes*.

judgement is long-suffering and his censures are light. He is so delighted with the fullness and beauty of life that he often forgets to condemn. Not so Euripides. He brings the offenders mercilessly to his bar, and looks past traditional reputation to the naked self within: Menelaus, Odysseus, Jason, Orestes, Helen, Hermione, Apollo, Aphrodite, Hera, Artemis: we see their souls 'marked with the whip, and full of the prints and scars of perjuries and crimes, and crooked with falsehood and imposture'. Euripides does not ask whether these heroes and deities were rich or famous; but only whether they conformed to the highest standards of goodness, which he and Athens knew. Were they just, courageous, merciful, truth-loving? If not, all the solemn plausibilities of legend should not save them. Into the pillory they should go.

Here is an instance, akin to those already quoted, which brings out clearly the ethical bent of the new drama. It is Euripides' treatment of one of those stories so common in Greek myth. Most of the famous families of legend owed their origin to a god. Apollo or Zeus conceived a passion for one of the fair daughters of men: in that early age the 'gods partook the weaknesses of mortals, and mortals the enjoyments of the gods'; and nothing came of the ephemeral connexion except that a hero was born into the world. Greek mythology is full of such tales: and the ninth Pythian of Pindar shows with what gracious beauty a poet—I had almost written a thinker—could invest one of these venial irregularities not half a century before Euripides held the stage.

But Euripides himself saw these matters otherwise, and, to our notions, more nearly as they are. A young Athenian girl was once picking the yellow flowers which

grew on the Long Rocks north of the Acropolis. There Apollo found her, seized and dragged her, crying, into a cave,—as a middle-aged woman, she could still remember the whiteness of the wrists that grasped her, and the blaze of golden light about him on that day.[1] She bore a child, and, to hide it from her mother, took it by night to the cave: there she laid it, hoping that somehow Apollo would help her. But he, having taken his pleasure, left her alone to bear the pain of childbirth, and the torture of concealment. Let us hear the story and the sequel, as she told it to an old servant, years later.

Creusa. Do you know the cliffs of Cecrops, which we call the Long Rocks—a cave in them which faces North? There I fought a fearful battle; I was forced into a miserable union with Apollo.

Servant. How did you conceal your intercourse with the god?

C. I bore a child; (*the servant starts*); endure to hear this from me.

S. Who attended you? and where? or were you alone in your pains?

C. Alone; in the cave which saw my union.

S. Where is the boy? You shall be childless no more.

C. Dead: exposed to savage beasts.

S. Dead? And did not Apollo, base god, help you?

C. He did not help: and my boy has his upbringing in the house of Death.

S. Who exposed him? Surely not you?

C. I exposed him. One dark night I swaddled him in a robe.

S. Had you no accomplice in the deed?

C. None but unhappiness and secrecy.

S. How did you harden yourself to leave the child in the cave?

C. How, indeed! many and bitter were my farewells.

S. Oh, bold, hard heart; and the god's heart harder than your own.

[1] *Ion*, 887–91.

C. Yes: and if you had seen the child stretching out its hands to me.[1]

No more was heard of the child, and Creusa, its mother, married the King of Athens. In the play she is the stately, middle-aged Queen of Athens: but we are not allowed to forget that early adventure on the cliffs of her home. Euripides loves to trace the bad effect of suffering on female character, and Creusa is his childless woman. No baby has been born to her since the one who was lost; and external prosperity cannot fill this void in her life. The young temple servant at Delphi admires and envies her home and lineage. 'So far my happiness goes; no further'; is her bitter reply.[2] ἔπαθον ἄχος ἄβιον, she says of herself, 'My sorrow is too deep for life.' And when at the end of the play, after jealousies, blasphemies, devilry, and attempted murder, Apollo, who set this train of misery in motion and has been skulking in the background to shield his reputation from the discredit of exposure, at last puts up another deity to restore the lost child (now a grown man), we see that the god's reparation is incomplete, and that Creusa's happiness comes too late to compensate for a wasted and tragic youth. That is how Euripides saw a light-hearted divine amour, which Pindar would have invested with the splendour of poetry. To him it was the brutal rape of a helpless girl. It had the consequences which such actions have. It added a *quotum* to the sum of human misery on earth.[3]

[1] *Ion*, 936–7, 939, 940, 946–61. I have shortened the opening of the dialogue.

[2] l. 264.

[3] The preceding is, of course, not even an attempt at a complete account of Euripides, who had other qualities than a critical intellect. As with Pindar and Herodotus in the fifth, and Plato in the seventh chapter, I have merely dwelt on those sides of him which illustrate my particular point.

Here we may take leave of the Age of Reason. For though we have hardly crossed its threshold, we have seen enough to judge of its significance. In it the Greek genius enters decisively on a new course. Its youth is closed, henceforth it faces the strenuous duties and painful virtues of men. It studies how to live and how to know. Stoics, Epicureans, Cynics, arise to be the spiritual doctors of erring humanity. They chasten it and fortify it and show it a new way of life and save its soul. Meanwhile others take the wages of science, and give up their lives to the accumulation of knowledge. In Athens Aristotle and his followers made huge collections of facts, from a complete list of all the plays acted in Athens, with the names of their authors, actors, and managers, down to the famous analysis of 158 constitutions, of which one, the constitution of Athens, has survived to our own day. Alexandria has its Museum and Library and Botanical Gardens. Pergamum, Antioch, Tarsus have their schools of learned men. In literary history Heraclides, in literary criticism Zenodotus and Aristarchus, in grammar Dionysius of Thrace, in music Aristoxenus, in social history Dicaearchus, in astronomy Hipparchus, in geometry Archimedes and Euclid, in mechanics Heron, in physical geography and cartography Eratosthenes, made huge collections of data, used the methods of critical inquiry, and laid the foundations of sciences. And these are but a few names. On agriculture alone, Varro, the Roman, knew of fifty Greek treatises. Equally thorough and wide is the work done in philosophy. Through different paths, Stoics, and Epicureans, Cynics, the followers of Plato and those of Aristotle sought for virtue and happiness, and opened up the fields of physics, metaphysics, logic, psychology, ethics.

And so when Christianity comes, she finds the world in a sense prepared for her. There are old bottles which will hold her new wine and not break. There is a metaphysic and a moral philosophy, and a vocabulary ready for her. S. Paul will find the opposition of 'flesh' and 'spirit' close to his hand: S. John will have the *logos*, in which he can express the Person of Christ: S. Thomas will have the system of Aristotle in which to propound the mysteries of the gospel. Apologists will use the Greek method of allegory for Old Testament difficulties: they will borrow arguments against Greek gods from Greek philosophers, and cite Plato and Euemerus as witnesses against Zeus. The Hell and Heaven and Purgatory of Christianity will borrow punishments and rewards from the pictures which Orphism has drawn of a life to come. Thus with Socrates and Euripides, we are on the watershed whence the streams of European life descend. An infinite prospect opens before us.

> Tanta patet rerum series atque omne futurum
> Nititur in lucem.

That is the significance of the fifth century. It fixed the lines on which henceforward men were to work. It brought to reasonable perfection the tools which they were to use. Without it the services of Greece to the world would have been incomplete. Intersect Hellenism about the close of the sixth century, and the line drawn would give us some of the greatest poetry in Greece. But below it would fall the movement which gave a civilization to the Roman Empire, and the spirit of knowledge to us. Without the fifth century and its consequences Greek influence would have hardly touched the world.

If this is so, why is not the late Greek more attractive than his ancestors? Why does not our interest progressively increase as we pass from Socrates to Aristotle and from Aristotle to Theophrastus, and thence into ages whose sentiment grows ever liker to our own, and whose thought becomes ever more adapted to modern needs? Have we here another instance of scholastic pedantry, which fixes on certain periods as classical, and confines itself to these with such exclusiveness that half the pupils which it trains do not realize that Hellenism lived on after the battle of Chaeronea, and barely know the names of the later thinkers? Or did a degenerative change really come over Greece? And was Nietzsche right to argue that Socrates and Euripides were the first of her decadents? Such questions are not easy to settle. Yet most of us have tacitly answered them in our thoughts. Greece interests us after the fall of Athens, but we do not grow enthusiastic over it. How many people, if fate offered them the life of a classical Greek, would accept it at the price of living in the fourth or following centuries B.C.? The Athenians themselves were conscious of decadence. In a passage where, though the words are put on the lips of Pericles, the thoughts are clearly the thoughts of Xenophon, the latter deplores the decay of Athens. 'How can we convert men to a passion for the virtue and renown and happiness of old? The city has degenerated. The men of old, men say, were far superior to our contemporaries.'[1] Two generations later Aeschines speaks in the same tone to the assembled Athenians. 'If some one asked you whether you think the city more glorious to-day than it was in the times of your ancestors, you would all agree that it was not. Were men better then than now?

[1] Xen. *Mem.* 3. 5. 7 f.

Yes, they were superior: we are far inferior.'[1] Allowing for human love of self-detraction, there is still some truth left in these statements. A slackness, a softness has come upon the Athenians. If Demosthenes was right, we see it in their unwillingness to find men and money to make war on Philip. The very language of the fourth century bears a curious and indirect witness to it. Note the adjectives which occur in the speeches of the orators, and consider to what they point. If Demosthenes wishes to praise a man, he calls him *μέτριος, φιλάνθρωπος, πρᾷος*, 'moderate, humane, gentle'. These were the qualities which the age applauded; these were the virtues of its choice. Qualities excellent in themselves, but in their continual recurrence the symptoms of a certain effeminacy and quietism very foreign to early Athens. Her virtues were more active. Thucydides does not call his countrymen 'moderate': bold (*ἄοκνοι*), enterprising (*τολμηροί*), innovating (*νεωτεροποιοί*), confident (*εὐέλπιδες*), are the adjectives he uses of them. Natural force (*φύσεως δύναμις*) and rapidity of judgement are the qualities he praises in Themistocles, and in Pericles independence and honesty.

It may seem unfair to blame a nation for humanitarian virtues which we should all be glad to possess. Yet even so there is something wrong with the fourth century. The greatest charm of its predecessor is too volatile for language. It is the fullness and beauty of Athenian life. After 400 B.C. that is gone. It fades out of Athens, leaving her ostensibly unchanged, just as the expression which gave all the charm to a face fades out of it without any definite alteration in the features. Henceforward she is a lively municipal town, with a powerful intellectual life, and political interests which excite much noise, but are

[1] Aesch. *In Ctes.* 178.

infantile in comparison with those of Rome. Perhaps it was the same at bottom before. Perhaps the Periclean age was an inflated air bubble. Perhaps Thucydides has imposed on us, and made us hold our breath over debates more trifling and enterprises less important than those of our provincial Town Councils. But at any rate he did impose on us. *Now* we are undeceived.

And if this is true of the fourth, it is still truer of succeeding centuries. The Greek takes up a new rôle and enters on his missionary campaign for the conversion of the earth. He is in the spiritual, what the mercenaries of Xenophon and Clearchus were in the military world. He follows in the train of each conquering race, to educate and influence it, to amuse and instruct its leisure. We meet him in every capital small and great, from Parthia and Babylon to Alexandria and Rome, ready to sell the secrets of virtue and art and knowledge to all who can hire him ; he acts the *Bacchae* at the court of Orodes, corrects the verses of Cornelius Gallus, translates Homer for the children of Livius Salinator, is the tame poet of Marius and the chosen companion of Scipio Africanus and of Nero. He comes in many guises : he is the financial adviser of Roman emperors, the philosopher and confessor of Roman aristocrats, the social parasite and 'hungry Greekling' of disappointed Roman clients. He is the doctor, the music-master, the rhetorician, the actor, the painter, the rope-dancer, the palmist, the masseur, of the ruling race. But one thing he is never again—a free citizen in an independent state.

This progressive political decay took the colour out of later Greek life, and is the first cause of its unattractiveness. But by its side goes a subtle spiritual degeneracy. We foresee it as we read Euripides. He propounds his

terrific problems and finds no solution to them. Orthodoxy, tradition, custom fall in ruins round him. A merciless critic, he fails to construct. Men cannot go on doing this for ever. Two things, says La Rochefoucauld, man can never look between the eyes for long, the sun and death. We may add a third to them—the universe as Euripides saw it. If the world really is as he shows it to us in the *Hecuba*, the *Troades*, the *Ion*, the *Electra*, the *Hippolytus*, then we had better shut our eyes or take to spectacles which colour things more agreeably.

So felt the fourth century. It suffered from the common *sequelae* of a critical agnosticism. Not from especial wickedness (scepticism and crime do not necessarily go hand in hand, nor is a godless world always an immoral one), but from torpor. Men have tired of hunting after truth which they never find, of engaging in a pursuit which calls for so much effort and brings so much pain, and yet has such small results to offer. They have grown afraid of the task which they have undertaken; when they think upon these things they are too painful for them, and they turn aside into easier paths. The higher literature takes to studying character instead of portraying action, or pursues artistic effects with much talk of art for art's sake; and a corresponding change comes over the attitude of educated men to life. A generation grows up which takes few risks and makes little progress, which is content with 'a modest competence' in matters of intellect even more than in income. Vigour is replaced by virtuosity; and life by refined criticism on it. The ideas of such a society are generally cultured, the ideals of it are always bourgeois—and neither of these adjectives indicates a higher level of humanity. It is for this kind of society that comedy is written, if we mean

by comedy, not the coarse vivacity of Aristophanes, but the delicate wit of Menander or Molière or Congreve or the modern French school.

That is why the New Comedy is so typical of the fourth century, of which it is the most important literary product. Menander is the new Euripides. He has learnt from his great predecessor an idealization of female character, an interest in common life, and an exquisite style. But he has dropped the profound earnestness of his master. Tragedy has declined into comedy, the passionate search for truth into the genial criticism of common sense. Heroes and heroines give place to courtesans and buffoons and cooks and slaves; and the sufferings of tragedy, the dying Hippolytus and the blinded eyes of Oedipus, are replaced by the tears of disappointed lovers and the aching stomachs of hungry parasites. Menander's ideal is a comfortable and unheroic life—the bourgeois ideal of wild oats in youth, and respectability with a dowried wife in middle age.

No doubt there were loftier and more energetic minds in Athens than Menander's: but even these undergo a degenerative change. Action begins to be divorced from thought, and there appears a class of thinkers who are willing to be mere spectators of life; the best of them persuaded of the wisdom of views, which they make but a feeble attempt to enforce on the world, the worst of them contented to weigh and appraise a thousand theories without believing in, still less practising, one. It is impossible not to feel in reading Aristotle, that though his political speculations were started to meet a real need, yet he is satisfied with having created his ideal constitution, and almost indifferent to its becoming a reality on earth. He lives to know rather than to make his knowledge

effective. Even Plato, who is cut to the soul by the needs of his age, resigns himself to the view that his ideal state must remain in the clouds. He sees too clearly a vanity in human effort even when most successful, and is impatient and disgusted at the slow travelling and at the rough and muddy roads. So he leaves the earth and gives himself up to wandering in the clear and unimpeding aether of the intellect,

ἀεροβατῶν· καὶ περιφρονῶν τὸν ἥλιον,

as Aristophanes, a generation earlier, said scornfully of his kind, and builds his airy palaces where no one can hinder or defile or destroy.

The following century brought a revival, and philosophy once more became practical: nor has history many incidents more striking than the Stoic and Cynic attempt to save mankind through virtue. Perhaps we actually owe more to these ages than to earlier Greece. But the new world was never quite like the old. Greece had for ever lost two things—freedom and the glory of her early literature.

EPILOGUE

In spite of classical education, in spite of newspaper tributes to the greatness of Athens, the general public have never quite come to regard Greek literature as a living force. Most people—and among them many who have been through the public schools—class it vaguely with the civilizations of Egypt or Assyria as something which has an archaeological interest, but is not suitable for general education. And of those who realize that it is more than this, how many think of it as genuinely alive? How many would turn to its writers expecting to meet a criticism of life as true and poignant as that of our own literature, or to see, as they read, the world changed and illuminated for them by Greek tragedy as by Shakespeare? How many regard the ideals of Homer or Aeschylus as at least as effective as those of Milton or Dryden, or think of Thucydides and Euripides as more truly 'modern' than Dickens or Thackeray?

'Ancient' and 'modern'; 'dead' and 'living'—the familiar antitheses of educational controversy have made us their dupes, and we swallow the adjectives whole, confusing ancient with antiquated and cotemporary with modern. If a language is spoken or a religion venerated in our own day, we hastily conclude that it is 'modern' in every sense of the word: if it is 'ancient'

or ' dead ', we suppose it to be mere litter on the rubbish heap of the past. Yet old thoughts are not necessarily senile, nor are cotemporary thoughts necessarily of value. We should be landed in strange conclusions if it were so: Bantu would be a ' modern ' language, and the rites of Bush tribes a ' modern ' religion; Hellenism would be obsolete, because it lies sixteen centuries behind us, and Christianity superseded, because it was born in the empire of Augustus.[1]

No; Greek thought is still as living as our own. Greek freedom could have taught us lessons of toleration up to, and even in the nineteenth century. Greek sanity is a reducing medicine, suitable to purge some of the humours of modern literature. Greek directness will train us to clarify our thoughts and verify our emotions. Greek humanism is the clearest and simplest form of that religion of the earth, against which S. Paul and so many preachers since him have declaimed: in Plato we hear their voice already raised, and have a forecast of the coming of Christianity.[2] To how many of the phenomena mentioned

[1] In these paragraphs I am only speaking of what I believe to be the views of the public at large; and I am not urging the cause of compulsory Greek; that is a very different question, and one which I wish carefully to avoid.

[2] One of the reasons why Greek has such high educational value is that it continually poses fundamental problems, forces them on our attention, and so is an introduction to literature and thought. Thus Greek directness raises the great literary problems which centre round the value of romanticism: and Greek humanism suggests the contrast between the Christian and the humanistic view of life (see pp. 123–4).

The remarks on the ' modernity ' of Greece that follow are intended to emphasize the points where its thought touches ours, and deliberately take no account of the differences between us.

in the last chapter could we find modern parallels, for how many of the personages could we substitute modern names! Qualify Shelley's passionate idealism and love of beauty with the merciless insight of Ibsen and his fondness for the details of ordinary life—you have Euripides. France has created a Menander in the younger Dumas. The sophists are come to life again in a dozen popular teachers. M. Bourget has studied the disastrous influence of one of these 'seducers of youth' in *Le Disciple*, where the philosopher and his depraved pupil might almost pass for Socrates and one of those young men whom he was accused of corrupting. Nor are many writings more genuinely 'sophistic' than those of Mr. H. G. Wells, with their unshrinking audacity of thought, their wide range of subject, their appeal to the general public, their smattering of scientific knowledge, their pretensions to the scientific spirit. And Plato? Readers of M. Brunetière's *Sur les chemins de la croyance*, and of the novels of M. René Bazin, will feel that if modern France lacks a Plato, it exhibits many of those circumstances which produced his shuddering reaction from materialism into spiritual vision, from the disintegrating forces of individualist anarchy into a revolutionary conservatism. Perhaps if Newman had lived a generation later, we might have seen something like Plato again on earth.

But, turning from dangerous parallels, let us sum up the reasons of our approximation to Greece. First is Greek humanism. Greece, as we have said so often, stands for humanity, simple and unashamed, with all the variety of its nature free to play. The Greek set himself to answer the question how, with no revelation from God to guide him, with no overbearing necessity to cramp or intimidate him, man should live. It has been a tendency with our

own age either to deny that heaven has revealed to us in any way how we ought to behave, or to find such a revelation in human nature itself. In either case we are thrown back on ourselves and obliged to seek our guide there. That is why the influence of Greece has grown so much. The Greeks are the only people who have conceived the problem similarly; their answer is the only one which has yet been made. So we are turning back to Greece and beginning to understand what the Greeks meant; we are beginning to canvass their views and in some cases to accept them. In Germany, Professor von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, in England Professor Murray, have entered into the Greek mind to a degree impossible to previous generations.

Secondly—and it is this, as we have said before, which ties us so closely to the fifth century—the only *thinking* civilization in the world before our own is that of Greece. Greece tried to base life on reason. But on the collapse of Graeco-Roman culture, mankind took refuge in a series of despotisms, political and intellectual, which lasted to and through the Middle Ages; the Roman Catholic Church evolved a system which saved them from thinking on theology and morals; the theory of divine right, if it did not destroy political thought, imprisoned it within fixed limits. At the Reformation the world formally declared itself free, though without quite understanding what it meant by the declaration; through subsequent centuries it has moved towards a gradual realization of the consequences of freedom, and now, in an almost complete emancipation, has admitted reason as its one standard, and is shaping its theory of life to meet her demands. In short we are resuming the task which from different standpoints the Sophists, Socrates, Euripides, and Plato,

so long ago essayed. Hence we have an inner sympathy with them which was hardly possible before our own day; and one of them at least, Euripides, has remained a puzzle and a stumbling-block to critics, till an age came which could understand him, because it was his spiritual contemporary.

These are the two chief causes which have brought Greece nearer to us than to our predecessors. They are accidental causes: we happen at the present time in some ways to have taken the same attitude to life as the Greeks of a certain age, and so they seem to us living and modern. But there is another reason, far more important, which gives Hellas life, and will keep it alive even in ages which are far away from its mind. We must not forget this, nor rest the permanence of Hellenism on a temporary relation between its thought and ours. Greek literature has a stronger fountain of life in the immortality which all thought and utterance earn when it is truly and rightly devised; it has the immortality of what, in the widest sense of the word, is art. There are some sentences of Plutarch which describe this quality far better than any words of mine can do, and they may fitly close this account of the Greek genius; Plutarch wrote them in his own age about the Periclean buildings on the Acropolis, but they will bear a wider application. 'For this cause therefore those works are more wonderful; because they were perfectly made in so short a time and have continued so long a season. For every one of those which were finished up at that time seemed then to be very ancient touching the beauty thereof: and yet for the grace and continuance of the same, it looketh at this day as if it were but newly done and finished, there is such a certain kind of flourishing freshness in it, which letteth that the injury of time cannot

impair the sight thereof. As if every of those foresaid works had some living spirit in it, to make it seem young and fresh: and a soul that lived ever, which kept them in their good continuing state.'[1] That is a just description of Greek Literature.

[1] *Vit. Periclis.* 13 (tr. North).

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